

## Black Bird Fly

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/29596053) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/29596053>.

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Stats:

Published: 2021-02-21 Completed: 2022-04-01 Words: 133,127  
Chapters: 34/34

# Black Bird Fly

by [MollyPollyKinz](#)

## Summary

“Sure thing, kiddo,” Schlatt told Tubbo. He looked over at Tommy. “You can take your cloak off if you want, kid.”

“I’m not a kid,” Tommy said automatically, immediately gripping onto his cloak more tightly.

He didn’t want Tubbo to hate him. As much as Tommy hated to admit it, he actually liked Tubbo quite a bit, and if he took the cloak off, Tommy was sure to be cast out immediately.

Or, Tommy runs away from Dream, hiding his wings from everyone he knows.

## Notes

This is indirectly inspired by Val's [Feathered](#).

EDIT: I'm sure you've all heard about Wilbur turning out to be terrible. If you haven't, maybe look into it. Well, between him and Dream, I'm putting this disclaimer in all my fics. These characters are not the CCs, nor do they reflect my opinion on them. Either separate the two or don't read the fic. Thank you <3

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy was eleven years old the first time he met Tubbo. They were in the market, standing in front of the fruit stand.

*“You have no friends,” his father would always say, “Nobody wants you.”*

The sun was directly above him, beating down on Tommy’s navy-blue cloak and making his wings uncomfortably hot. Anyone else would’ve shed the cloak. It was summer, after all.

Tommy wasn’t anyone else. The cloak stayed on.

“Hello!” Tubbo had said, though to Tommy he was nothing more than *the short boy*. He was holding a large watermelon in both of his arms, which made him look even smaller in size.

Tommy would rather not be having a conversation with this short boy, but his father had taught him not to be rude. And while a part of him wanted to spit in this short boy’s face for that exact reason, Tommy knew that the short boy probably meant well enough.

“Hi,” he said shortly. He glanced up at the fruit-seller, who was drumming her fingers against the stand impatiently. “How much for the strawberries?”

“Sixteen bronze pieces a pound,” the woman said with a bored expression.

Tommy began scrounging his pockets for the bronze. He should have enough; he had fifty bronze pieces last time he checked.

“Oh, you like strawberries?” the short boy asked, still apparently interested with Tommy. His green wings lifted slightly, probably to cool off from the heat. “I like strawberries too! We grow a whole bunch at our garden, you should see them!”

“That sounds really great,” Tommy said, his tone matching the fruit-seller’s. He handed the fruit-seller the bronze, and she started weighing the strawberries. “Let me just get the strawberries, and I’ll be right with you.”

For some stupid reason, the boy’s face brightened at Tommy’s blatant sarcasm. “Really?”

Tommy sighed, scooping the pound of strawberries into his knapsack, hoping they wouldn’t get squished too much. “No.”

The boy sagged, looking very sad all of a sudden. “Oh,” he said quietly, “Yeah, that’s okay, I understand.”

Tommy sighed again, this time feeling bad for the boy. Maybe it wouldn’t kill him to see this kid’s garden, and then he would be well on his way, traveling from town to town like he

always did.

“Fine, I’ll see your garden,” he groaned.

Almost instantly, the boy perked up, smiling widely. “Really?”

Tommy was already regretting this. His wings were feeling itchy underneath his cloak, but he couldn’t afford to take it off out in the open like this. And now he couldn’t even try to make a quick getaway because he had just promised this kid that he would visit his garden.

Maybe he could just take it back.

His father’s voice whispered in the back of his mind, “*A promise is a promise, Thomas.*”

“Yes,” he said, a little more meekly than he would have preferred. He was always shaken when his father’s words would intrude upon his thoughts like that.

The boy was not at all perturbed by Tommy’s moment of weakness. “Great!” he cheered, “I’m Tubbo by the way, what’s your name?”

“*Thomas.*” “*Toms.*” “*Tomathy.*”

“Tommy,” Tommy said after a pause.

If even possible, Tubbo’s grin grew wider at the admission. “Hello, Tommy!” he said. He hefted the large watermelon in his arms up a bit. “I’d shake your hand, but you can see my hands are kind of full—”

“This is not a place for making friends,” the fruit-seller interrupted suddenly, her face riddled with impatience, “If you’re not going to buy anything else, then scram.”

Tommy flinched at the tone. “Sorry,” he whispered.

Tubbo did not seem nearly as upset.

“Come on!” He started walking away. “I’ll show you my garden!”

Tommy sighed. His wings were getting more and more uncomfortable by the minute, but he obediently followed Tubbo.

As they walked, Tommy found himself staring at Tubbo’s wings. When Tubbo walked and moved, the green feathers rippled like a field of grass on a windy day.

Well, maybe Tommy was exaggerating, but he would never forget the first time he saw a field. The way the sun hit the bright green grass, the way the wind made the small blades rustle against each other, the way Tommy could roll around in it without a worry in the world...

And now he was getting distracted.

After they had walked for a bit, Tubbo stopped at the door of a nice-enough looking house. “I need to give Dad the watermelon,” he explained, “Do you want to come inside?”

Tommy hesitated. On one hand, it was probably cooler inside than out in this blistering heat, and maybe he wouldn’t mind his cloak so much. Unless, of course, Tubbo’s father expected him to take it off.

Tommy remembered the first time he leeches on the kindness of strangers. They had expected him to take off his cloak. Apparently, it was a common courtesy. After enough prompting, Tommy obeyed. He was *so hungry*, and it was clear that these people wouldn’t feed him if he didn’t.

They kicked him out of their house almost instantly after. They didn’t want a *black-born* risking their children.

Tommy understood. He wouldn’t want a black-born risking his children either. Honestly, it was a miracle his father had kept him around, even if it was for the wrong reasons.

*“Your power is unmitigated.”*

So, Tommy could either go into Tubbo’s house in the hopes of cooling down, or he could stay outside and suffer to avoid the risk of being ostracized again.

Then again, if Tubbo’s father yanked the cloak off and kicked him out, it would give Tommy a good excuse to not wear his cloak for the next couple of hours, which would be amazing on so many levels.

First of all, his wings would no longer be hot and itchy from being forced underneath a cloak during the summer. Second of all, he would actually get a chance to stretch them out a bit, which would be wonderful, because *man* were they feeling stiff right now.

And besides, he had already gotten enough food from this town, and he was sure he could find some form of work in the next town over, so running wouldn’t be all that problematic if worst came to worst.

“Yeah, sure,” Tommy conceded.

Tubbo beamed. “Could you open the door for me then?” he asked, using his watermelon to gesture toward the door.

Tommy sighed, but he grabbed the hot metal knob and opened the door.

“Thanks!” Tubbo said, sounding chipper.

Tommy followed Tubbo inside the house and felt almost instant relief. The shade was already a huge help compared to the direct sunlight that was trying to inject as much heat into his cloak as possible.

“Dad!” Tubbo called as he walked down the front hall, “I brought that watermelon!”

Tommy followed Tubbo into the kitchen, where a man with blood-red wings was sitting at the table, writing something down and acting as if he didn't notice two children marching into his kitchen. When they entered, he looked up, smiling.

"Put it on the table, bud," he told Tubbo, gesturing to the space in front of him.

"Okay." Tubbo quickly put the watermelon on the table with a loud thump.

Tubbo's father looked over to Tommy, who winced at the attention. This was it.

To Tommy's surprise, the smile didn't leave Tubbo's father's face.

"Hey, you a friend of Tubbo's?"

Technically, no. Tommy had only just met Tubbo, for prime's sake. Tommy began to shake his head, but Tubbo spoke up suddenly.

"I'm going to show him our garden!" he said, once again sounding strangely excited.

"Okay," Tubbo's father said, "Be careful out there."

Tubbo nodded before grabbing Tommy by the hand. Tommy barely had time to flinch before Tubbo was dragging Tommy out the back door and back into the heat of the sun.

"This is my garden!" Tubbo declared, gesturing to the mess of flowers and crops that was this kid's backyard. He let go of Tommy as he led him to the flowers.

"These are the flowers."

"No crap," Tommy snorted.

Still, he wouldn't deny that he liked looking at the flowers. There were so many colors, with blues and yellows and reds. Round bugs kept buzzing around, landing on the flowers before taking off again. Tommy wasn't exactly sure why the bugs were doing that, but it was nice to see regardless.

"I grow roses and irises and daffodils," Tubbo elaborated, pointing to the red, blue, and yellow flowers in turn.

"What are the bugs doing?" Tommy asked, his curiosity getting the better of him.

He tried not to curl in on himself. Father had never liked it when he asked questions, but Sam had always been willing to provide answers. Still, it was dumb of him to test his luck this early on in his and Tubbo's relationship.

Tommy shook himself mentally. There was no relationship. Tubbo was just a dude. He needed to get a hold of himself.

Tubbo gave him an incredulous look, and Tommy sunk into his cloak a little bit, being careful to make sure his wings stayed covered.

“You mean the bees?” Tubbo asked.

“I mean the buzzing ones,” Tommy replied with a scowl, trying to make it sound like he knew exactly what he was talking about.

Tubbo nodded. “Yeah, those are the bees. Do you really not know what bees are?”

Tommy, in fact, had no idea what bees were, except that they were apparently round and buzzed a lot, but that was only from watching them just now. Of course, he wasn’t about to let Tubbo know that, so he straightened his back, trying to look very old and knowledgeable.

“Of course, I know what bees are,” he said, “I was just messing with you, man.”

Tubbo looked doubtful. “Okay...” he said slowly. Tubbo glanced back at the flowers. “Well, bees collect pollen and help other plants grow.”

Tommy wanted to ask what pollen was, but he didn’t want to embarrass himself any more than he already had, so he kept his mouth shut.

“I like to think that the bee that always goes to that daffodil is named Spins,” Tubbo said, pointing to the bee sitting on the daffodil.

“But they all look the same,” Tommy pointed out, furrowing his eyebrows. Was Tubbo making things up? Was Tommy just stupid?

Tubbo shrugged. “I know. I just like to pretend.”

Tubbo proceeded to show Tommy the various fruits and vegetables that he grew, and Tommy couldn’t help but to feel a twinge of jealousy toward him. Tommy had to work his butt off just to get enough money to buy just enough food for survival, and here Tubbo was enjoying a constant supply of food all the time.

“How do you even manage to grow this stuff?” Tommy grumbled.

Tubbo straightened, and his wings puffed up slightly. “Oh, well, water, sun, you know.”

Tommy only sort of knew that, but that was completely beside the point. Besides, Tubbo was clearly hiding something. Tommy vaguely wondered if Tubbo’s garden success had something to do with his magic.

Somehow, they managed to hang out for the rest of the afternoon, and Tommy even managed to forget about the discomfort in his wings. Strangely enough, Tubbo was a nice enough dude, and Tommy actually enjoyed spending time with him.

It wouldn’t last. Tommy knew it wouldn’t last; his wings were a constant reminder of that, but it was nice for the time being.

Which is why Tommy actually found himself feeling bummed when Tubbo’s dad called him in for dinner.



“Coming!” Tubbo called, jumping to his feet. He looked down at Tommy, who was quite unsure of what to do with himself. “Do you want to eat with us? Or do you have to get home?”

Tommy immediately scrambled to his feet, his stomach growling. His strawberries should be able to keep for a few days, and who was he to deny a free meal?

“Yeah, I can eat with you, if that’s okay with your father, of course.”

Tubbo brightened. “Oh, I’m sure it is.”

Tommy wasn’t so sure, but Tubbo knew his father better than Tommy did for obvious reasons, so Tommy would just have to trust him.

Since when had he been so quick to trust strangers? Did Tubbo even count as a stranger anymore?

Hopefully Tubbo’s father would continue ignoring the cloak thing.

They entered the house, and Tommy practically salivated at the smell of something cooking. The sight of the stew sitting on the table only made his stomach growl. When was the last time he had a proper meal like this?

“Hey dad,” Tubbo said, “Can Tommy eat with us?”

Tubbo’s dad smiled and ruffled Tubbo’s hair. Tommy tried not to think of a time when his father would ruffle his hair like that.

“Sure thing, kiddo,” Tubbo’s dad said. He looked over at Tommy. “You can take your cloak off if you want, kid.”

“I’m not a kid,” Tommy said automatically, immediately gripping onto his cloak more tightly.

He didn’t want Tubbo to hate him. As much as Tommy hated to admit it, he actually liked Tubbo quite a bit, and if he took the cloak off, Tommy was sure to be cast out immediately.

*“They hate you for your power. They’re frightened of you.”*

Tommy grimaced, trying to get his father’s words out of his head.

Tubbo’s dad raised his eyebrows. “Uh-huh,” he said dryly, “How old are you then?”

“Fifteen,” Tommy lied.

“Tommy, you told me you were eleven earlier,” Tubbo said calmly.

Tommy’s face heated up, and he glared half-heartedly at Tubbo. “Tubbo, you ruined my cover,” he said.

He gave Tubbo’s dad a nervous look. Tubbo’s dad only laughed.

“I don’t think we ever properly introduced ourselves,” he said, holding his hand out to shake. Tommy took it nervously. “I’m Schlatt. You’re Tommy, right?”

Tommy nodded, his mouth dry.

“So, your parents aren’t waiting for you at home?”

Tommy shook his head quickly. “Um... my father’s on a trip.”

It was technically true. Tommy’s father was always on trips. Now *where*, Tommy couldn’t even begin to say. It was possible that he was searching for Tommy.

The mere thought made his wings shudder.

Schlatt frowned, and Tommy shrunk in on himself, hoping he didn’t say the wrong thing. But as quickly as it came, the frown smoothed out again, and Schlatt smiled again.

“Well, like I said before, you can take off that cloak, and then we can eat,” he said, walking over to a cabinet in the corner of the kitchen.

Tommy stared at the man’s blood-red wings. He wished he had wings that color. Or even green, or even anything *but* his color. Maybe then he wouldn’t be so afraid to take off a stupid cloak.

“Um...” Tommy began, clinging onto his cloak so tightly that he could feel his nails from the other side of the fabric, “I would really rather not.”

Tubbo looked confused, and Schlatt turned back to give Tommy a suspicious look. Tommy immediately looked down at the wood floors.

“Okay then,” Schlatt said.

Tommy snapped his head up, looking up at Schlatt in shock. Schlatt only shrugged.

“Listen kid, I’m not here to tell you how to dress,” Schlatt said calmly, “If you want to keep your cloak on so badly, I’m not going to stop you.”

Relief washed over Tommy so heavily that he almost felt like he was about to fall asleep then and there.

“Thank you,” he said.

The room was quiet for a moment, but Tubbo was quick to fill in the silence.

“You can sit next to me!” Tubbo ran over to the seat he clearly wanted Tommy to sit in, his wings flapping slightly behind him.

Tommy followed, smiling slightly. “Okay.”

As they ate, Tommy noticed that Schlatt wasn't like his father. Tommy's father was cruel and demanding, but Schlatt was kind and patient. Tommy was glad that Tubbo had a father like him, even if it made Tommy's heart twinge with jealousy.

He hated the jealousy. It made him feel ridiculous, ungrateful.

But still, jealousy aside, Tommy had a good time eating and laughing and pretending nothing was wrong in the world. Heck, Tommy almost got his father's words out of his head.

Almost.

*"You're a killer, Thomas,"* he would say, *"People should fear you, not like you."*

Tommy's food tasted less good after he remembered that.

## Chapter End Notes

I wanted to make a wing fic so I did.

The magic system will be explained more in depth later on in the fic.

I hope you enjoyed, please be nice in the comments, and thank you for reading!

# Chapter 2

## Chapter Summary

Dadschlatt, nesting, and angsty pasts

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Can Tommy stay for the night?” Tubbo asked almost as soon as they had finished eating.

Tommy’s eyes widened. No. No way. He had *not* signed up for this. He had signed up for a meal; he had not signed up to *stay the night*.

Staying the night was dangerous on so many levels. What if someone saw his wings while he rolled around? What if a couple of feathers fell out? What if he had a nightmare and woke everyone up? What if he accidentally killed someone?

Well, Tommy was pretty sure he had never killed anyone in his sleep, but that was mostly because he had never shared a room with someone before. Was he expected to sleep in the same room as Tubbo? He didn’t want to kill Tubbo.

Even now, he could feel his magic thrum under his veins, begging to be used, begging to destroy anything it touched. To kill, kill, kill.

*“Kill him.”*

“You okay there?” Schlatt asked.

Tommy flinched, but he forced himself to take deep breaths and nod.

Tubbo was frowning, and Tommy curled in on himself. Had he screwed up again? He hadn’t meant to, but he only did seem to be good at causing pain. Maybe he should just go now while he had the chance.

His wings twitched underneath his cloak, and Tommy forced them to stay still.

“You don’t have to stay,” Tubbo said, his wings moving slightly, “I just thought you might be lonely if your father’s away.”

“Tha-thanks,” Tommy whispered, “But, um, I…”

He couldn’t stay. He was too attached as it was. He needed to leave *now*, before he actually formed proper bonds with these people. Because Tommy was weak when it came to bonds,

and he wouldn't be able to leave, and then his father would find him.

And then Tommy's father would make him kill both Schlatt *and* Tubbo

*"Do you love me, Thomas?" his father had said, "If you love me, kill him. If you love him too much to kill him, then you clearly don't love me."*

Tommy couldn't stay here.

He got to his feet so quickly that his wooden chair toppled over with a loud clatter. His magic surged, and Tommy pushed it back. *No, no, stay away.*

"I'm too dangerous," Tommy whispered, "I need to leave."

Schlatt raised his eyebrows. "Kid, you're eleven. I doubt you could be dangerous if you tried."

Tommy shook his head, stepping back. "You don't understand. He'll-I'll—"

Tommy broke himself off from his own sentence and ran out the door, praying that his cloak didn't flap too much behind him. He needed to get out. He needed to *leave*.

Tommy could barely think straight as he dashed down the path of the town. The sky was a dark gray. It would be night soon. That was good; it meant that Tommy would possibly be able to fly without being seen.

*Black-born, black-born, black-born; unnatural creatures of death; only destined to kill; do you love me, Thomas?*

Tommy couldn't breathe, but he kept running. His father was going to find him; his father was going to find him; Sam's sacrifice was going to be in vain; *Sam—*

And suddenly Tommy's veins *burned*.

Tommy let out a cry of pain as he toppled into the dirt path. His magic rushed underneath his skin *begging* to be released, *begging* to be used after months of neglect, *begging* now that the sun was gone and the moon was in.

Tommy's magic had been wanting this for a while now, but never did Tommy think it would *hurt* so much. It had been just twinging of pain before, not *this* feeling like his veins were on fire, like he couldn't hold on, like he was doomed to *burn into ashes and he'd deserve it for all of the ashes of the people he had killed, he had murdered*.

*Sam—*

"Kid?" a voice echoed in Tommy's hearing. He squeezed his eyes shut.

"Sam?" Tommy asked—*begged*.

“Guess again,” the voice—Schlatt, Tommy realized—said dryly. Tommy felt a hand grab him by the arm, and Tommy shrunk back just as the voice swore. “You’re burning up. What—?”

Tommy let out a low moan, feeling his magic beg for a feather in his hand as it burned under his skin and in his fingers. He could just reach back, pick pluck a dark-colored feather from his wings, and kill Schlatt then and there. Then the pain would end, then he could feel free again.

*“Killing’s in your nature, Thomas. It’s the only way to stop your magic from swallowing you whole.”*

No. Tommy didn’t want to kill anyone. Tommy especially didn’t want to kill *Schlatt*, who was the kindest adult Tommy had met since *Sam*. Tommy didn’t want to lose another kind adult. Not like this, not by Tommy’s own hand.

Besides, Tommy didn’t even want to think about how *Tubbo* would react if he found out that his new friend was a *black-born*, a *killer*, his father’s *murderer*.

Tommy felt strong arms lift him off the ground, and he struggled weakly. Schlatt was taking him somewhere.

“Kid, I need to get you to a warm nest at least,” Schlatt said, sounding impatient.

Normally, Tommy would’ve shrunk back at the tone. Now, he continued struggling all the more, trying his hardest to squirm out of Schlatt’s arms, too afraid to touch him, too afraid to hurt him with his hands.

“I can’t,” he gasped, “My magic... I’ll hurt—”

Tommy felt Schlatt stop in his tracks. “Prime, *kid*,” Schlatt whispered, sounding horrified, “You’ve been repressing your magic?”

Tommy didn’t reply. Schlatt immediately set him down. Thank prime. Maybe Schlatt would leave Tommy, and Tommy wouldn’t be worried about killing anyone as he died.

*“You think I can die, Thomas? Because neither of us are dying tonight.”*

“I’m sorry,” Tommy whispered, “I’m sorry, please, I don’t want to die, I don’t want to kill him, please, why do I have to kill him?”

*“He’s a distraction,”* his father’s voice echoed in his ears, *“You have a destiny, and he’s distracting you from it.”*

“He’s my friend.” Tears pricked at Tommy’s eyes as the pain in his body worsened. “Please, father, he’s my friend.”

*“You don’t need friends,”* his father spat. Tommy felt him press a black feather into Tommy’s hand. *“I’m the only friend you need. Now kill him.”*

Tommy shuddered, but his father's word was law. He allowed his magic to surge into his palm—*why did it hurt so much, prime*—and crush the feather in his fist into dust.

His fingertips tingled with power. All he needed to do was touch him.

*“Do it.”*

Tommy didn't want to kill him. He didn't want to be with his father. He wanted to *leave*.

Without thinking, Tommy reached to touch his father's neck. His fingers touched the hard porcelain mask instead. It dissolved into a million pieces. And—

The pain left.

Still, Tommy could see his father glaring at him. His eyes flashing green. He opened his mouth—

*“Tommy, kid, can you hear me?”*

...that wasn't right. That wasn't how his father's voice was supposed to sound. He was supposed to be *angry*, not whatever that emotion was.

Tommy suddenly realized that his eyes were shut, that his breathing was gasping breaths, that he wasn't in his musty underground room.

No, he was... leaning against someone?

*“Sam?”* Tommy whispered for the second time that day.

Had Sam saved him? Was Sam back? Prime, please let this be Sam. *Please*.

*“Sorry, kid.”*

*Schlatt*, Tommy realized again. Disappointment crushed him like a heavy boulder. He should've known better. Sam wouldn't save him. Sam *couldn't* save him.

Not anymore.

Tommy didn't open his eyes. He wanted to continue living in his fantasy. He wanted to pretend that this was Sam wrapping his arms around him, that Sam was comforting him after his father had made him kill another man, that Sam would be there and *never leave*.

At least the pain was gone.

Wait. *The pain was gone*. That meant he used his magic. That meant he killed someone.

Tommy opened his eyes with a snap, jerking himself out of Schlatt's arms.

*“Who?”* Tommy gasped, jumping to his feet to begin his desperate search for a body.

It couldn't have been Schlatt; Schlatt was sitting right here, having the gall to look confused. There was no body in sight. Did Tommy kill a plant? But they were in the middle of an empty path, there was no plant to kill. And Tommy didn't see any of the familiar ashes that he left when he destroyed non-living objects, so *what*—

A small bottle of *something* was sitting next to Schlatt, but that didn't matter, because it wasn't destroyed, so it couldn't have been the thing Tommy touched and *destroyed*—

Schlatt got to his feet.

“Tommy, what's going on?” he asked, his voice quiet, “What do you mean by who?”

“I mean *who*?!” Tommy shouted, “*What* did I kill?!”

Schlatt froze.

“Oh prime,” he whispered, “You're black-born, aren't you?”

That's when Tommy realized. His cloak was still on. It was still shielding both of his wings. And even if Schlatt had seen them, it was too dark. Schlatt could've easily assumed that Tommy's wings were a dark version of some other color.

Some other color. Not *black*.

Tommy's breath left him, and he took a step back, his wings flaring underneath his cloak.

He had screwed up.

But... shouldn't Schlatt have seen the destruction his magic wrought? Didn't Schlatt take one of Tommy's feathers to diffuse his magic?

Unless... Schlatt gave Tommy one of *his* feathers instead.

“I...” Tommy began.

He didn't know what to say. What was he supposed to say? He was a black-born. He was a *killer*. He had killed so many people. And Tommy had just made friends with Schlatt's *son*. Schlatt wasn't just going to be okay with that.

Maybe this was for the best. At least Tommy wouldn't have to worry about his father anymore.

“Please don't hurt me,” Tommy whispered, “I just-I just want...”

What did Tommy want?

He wanted to get away from his father, but past that?

Did Tommy *know* what he wanted? Did he want anything past that? Was Tommy's existence doomed to be a game of hunter and prey, with Tommy always cursed to hide away from his



father's shadow, from his father's *words*?

*"I'm the only one who will accept you,"* his father whispered into Tommy's hair, *"You're only safe with me."*

Sam's smile flashed across Tommy's mind.

Tommy shook himself. He didn't want to think about Sam right now.

The image of Tubbo's garden played in his mind. Then the laughter at the dinner table. The warmth Tommy had felt when he spent time with Tubbo, when he spent time with Schlatt.

"I won't hurt you," Schlatt said, his voice sounding more solemn than before, "And I need you to be honest with me. Do you actually have a place to stay?"

Tommy flinched. "I manage fine outside," he whispered, "it's still warmer than..."

Still warmer than the damp, cold room that Tommy had called home for the first eleven years of his life. Still warmer than the stone floors Tommy was forced to sleep on.

Tommy had deserved it, but that didn't mean that Tommy had to *enjoy* it.

Schlatt sighed, and Tommy wished he could make out his face in the dark.

"Come on, kid," he said, "Let's head back to my place. Tubbo's worried about you."

Tommy took a step back, hugging his cloak around himself like a security blanket. His wings wanted to break free, to create a shield, but after the memory he had just relived, Tommy wasn't sure if he'd be able to stomach the sight of them.

"Didn't you hear me?" Tommy demanded, "I'm a *black-born*. I'm *dangerous*."

"You're clearly a danger to no one but yourself," Schlatt snapped. Tommy flinched, and Schlatt let out another sigh, bringing his hand to his head. "Honestly kid, repressing your magic like that? Why didn't you just kill a plant?"

Like it was that simple. Like every time Tommy called on his power he didn't feel sick, unclean, *evil*.

"I hate it," Tommy whispered, "I hate it; I don't want anything to do with it."

*"You can't escape it, Toms."*

"We'll talk about this later," Schlatt said, "I know you won't hurt Tubbo. You've made that painstakingly obvious. *Please*, just... come home with me. For Tubbo at least."

Tubbo... Tommy liked Tubbo.

But wasn't that all the more reason to leave now while he had the chance?

"I'm still dangerous," Tommy protested, "My father, he'll—"

“I won’t let him,” Schlatt said firmly, “He won’t hurt anyone in my household. Not under my watch.”

Frustration bubbled underneath Tommy, and he shook his head, scowling.

“It’s not like that,” Tommy protested, “You don’t understand. He’s not just some *guy* you can beat up. He’s...”

Tommy trailed off. He had never thought of his father as anybody other than *father* before. But he was someone more than that. He was someone *far* more dangerous.

Schlatt’s voice was calm when he next spoke. “Who is your father?”

Tommy swallowed. Did he dare say it? Would even saying his name summon him to where Tommy stood? Once, Tommy had accidentally mentioned his name out loud, and his father had beat him for hours. It was Tommy’s own fault for being so careless with his words, but the memory burned into his mind like a hot iron rod, a constant reminder to *never ever* say his father’s name.

“I can’t—” Tommy’s voice came out as a gasp. “I can’t.”

Schlatt nodded. “Okay,” he said, “Just one night. Alright? One night, and then you can leave.”

Tommy hesitated. One night couldn’t hurt. Could it? Surely his father wouldn’t find Tommy *that* quickly. Tommy could stay over for one night.

Tommy nodded wearily. “Okay,” he whispered, “One night.”

“One night,” Schlatt agreed.

Tommy followed Schlatt back to his house, where Tubbo immediately tackled Tommy into a hug.

“Tommy!” he exclaimed, his wings wrapping around Tommy as well as his arms, “I never thought I’d see you again!”

Tommy cautiously returned the hug, trying not to revel in its warmth, trying not to imagine that this could be forever, that Tommy could have a hug like this every day if he only *stayed*.

Because Tommy couldn’t stay, and that was that. There was no point in dwelling on things that were never meant to be.

“Only for one night,” Tommy said, trying his best not to sound too reluctant over it.

He had only met Tubbo today, there was no point in being sad over a relationship that never had the chance to start to begin with.

Tubbo’s hug loosened a little bit as Tubbo sagged.

“Oh,” he said quietly. Then his voice brightened significantly, for some unknown reason. “But that’s better than nothing!”

“Alright Tubs,” Schlatt said, “Time for both of you to go to bed.”

Tommy allowed Schlatt to direct Tommy to a guest bedroom, and Tommy saw a pile of blankets sitting on the floor.

“You can nest however you’d like,” Schlatt said, gesturing to the pile of blankets, “But I’d recommend taking that cloak off before you sleep. It can’t be healthy for your wings.”

Tommy nodded, although he had no intention of doing anything of the kind. In fact, there was a more pressing matter at hand.

“I—” Tommy swallowed, “I don’t know how to nest.”

The silence in the room was suffocating, and Tommy was already curling in on himself, waiting for the judgement, waiting for the hit.

“*Prime*, kid,” Schlatt whispered, “You... you really got the short end of the stick, didn’t you?”

Tommy wasn’t exactly sure what that meant, so he just shrugged.

“I know what nesting is,” Tommy stuttered. He didn’t want Schlatt to think he was *that* pathetic. “I just... I never needed to know how before.”

“That changes now,” Schlatt said firmly. Tommy winced, and Schlatt’s voice softened. “Do you want me to get Tubbo to teach you?”

Tommy shrugged again, hugging himself. “I don’t want to bother him. I’ll be fine sleeping on the floor.”

“No way.” Schlatt crossed his arms. “If you’re only staying one night, then we’re doing this now. And Tubbo won’t mind.”

Tommy watched as Schlatt left the room.

Now alone, Tommy looked around, unsure of what to do with himself. Eventually, he decided to sit down on the pile of blankets. Tubbo returned not long after.

“Hi,” Tubbo said, sitting down next to Tommy, “Dad said you didn’t know how to nest?”

Tommy shrugged, feeling his face heat up.

“I never needed to before now,” he said quietly.

“*Nesting is unnecessary*,” his father had told him after Tommy asked, “*You don’t need it.*”

“That’s alright,” Tubbo said, his voice taking on a comforting tone. Tommy appreciated it. He wasn’t sure if he could take any pity. “I’ll show you. It’s simple, really.”

Tommy got off the pile of blankets, and Tubbo showed him how to arrange the blankets into a nest-like formation.

“Of course, everyone’s nests are unique to their personality,” Tubbo explained, “And they vary in shape depending on how someone sleeps. I sleep curled up in a ball, so my nests are rounder than others.”

“I sleep curled up too,” Tommy said quietly. He stared at the nest Tubbo had made. “Can... can I try?”

Tubbo nodded. “Of course!”

Tommy carefully began moving the blankets around, having only some idea of what he was doing. Still, he managed to arrange the blankets in such a way that looked at least somewhat comfortable to him.

Tommy sat down in it. It felt pretty good, for lack of a better word.

“Can I sit next to you?” Tubbo asked, his turn to sound timid.

A part of Tommy wanted to say no. He was too dangerous for Tubbo to seek company from him.

Another part of him craved Tubbo’s company as much as Tubbo seemed to want his.

“Okay.”

Tubbo climbed into the nest and sat to Tommy’s left. He rested his head against Tommy’s shoulder, and Tommy let out a little startled noise.

Tubbo moved away immediately. “Do you not like that?” he asked.

Tommy shook his head quickly. “No,” he said quickly, “you can do it.”

Tubbo nodded and returned his head to Tommy’s shoulder. Tommy slowly found himself leaning against Tubbo. He was... warm. Safe.

Tubbo’s right wing wrapped around Tommy’s wings and back, and Tommy’s wings itched to do the same, to wrap around Tubbo in a strange embrace. But he didn’t.

*One night, Tommy reminded himself as he fell asleep, This was only for one night.*

Hurt, comfort, and world building go brrrrrr.

I've read a good fic about nesting somewhere in this fandom, but i don't remember what it was called.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed, please be nice in the comments, and thank you for reading! <3

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Summary

Dadschlatt pov, dadschlatt pov, dadschlatt pov

Or, schlatt has thoughts

## Chapter Notes

Tw: child abuse, alcoholism, accidental teen pregnancy, underage drinking, discrimination, implied/referenced death sorta, implied kidnapping

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Schlatt would be the first to say that his life had kind of sucked.

His father had been black-born; the only reason Schlatt existed was because of a drunk night at the tavern. His mother had claimed that she was too hazy to notice that the man she was spending the night with had black wings.

Schlatt believed it. And whatever she had seen in the man to begin with ended the instant she had a clear enough mind to see his father's true nature. Schlatt's father was thoroughly slandered in his house.

*"Your good for nothing father could do more than you." "He's probably killed more men than you've made wine." "Don't be like that crazy man."*

Oh yeah, was it worth mentioning that his mother was an abusive hag?

Maybe the first few years of Schlatt's life weren't *awful*, he frankly didn't remember enough to know. What he *did* know was that as soon as he turned three, his life became a living hell.

You see, of all the different types of magic that Schlatt could've gotten with blood red wings and a drunk mother, *of course* the one he landed on was being able to turn water to wine. *Of course*.

So, Schlatt was suddenly his mother's barkeeper, giving her alcohol whenever the urge hit her, selling alcohol when she realized she needed money, drinking alcohol himself when he could finally scavenge some alone time.

The most disgusting part? Schlatt *enjoyed* ‘helping’ his mother. He *enjoyed* it. He thought it was good that he was “lightening the load” and becoming “less of a burden” and breaking free from “his father’s disgusting legacy.”

Schlatt now knew that all of that was a load of crap, but at the time, Schlatt actually believed those stupid lies his mother told him. He hated his father with as much passion as his mother, spat with everyone else whenever the term “black-born” was uttered, and drank the night away at the town’s tavern.

But he stepped outside one morning, ready to get away from his mother and her abusive crap for the day when there was a baby on his doorstep.

A baby.

On *his* doorstep.

Now, one really had to understand the situation Schlatt was facing in this moment. His head was still pounding from hangover. His stomach hurt, and the morning sunlight was already making him want to shrink away back into his house, which currently wasn’t an option, because his mother was yelling at him to be useful, which was doing absolutely *nothing* for his headache.

And now there was a baby on his doorstep. A baby with brown hair and green wings that barely looked more than a few days old.

Schlatt was about to do the only reasonable thing in this situation—turn around, go back to sleep, and wake up to see the baby gone—when the baby opened it’s eyes and started *bawling*.

Schlatt’s headache was really *not* having a good day.

So Schlatt did the *second* most reasonable thing to do and picked the baby up, hoping that the action would calm it down.

To Schlatt’s complete lack of surprise, he only succeeded in making the baby cry louder. Schlatt’s wings bristled. He was trying to get *away* from the noise. No wonder his mother couldn’t stand him if *this* was what he was doing to her hangovers when he was younger.

There was a note on the floor where Schlatt picked up the baby, so Schlatt stooped over to pick it up, ignoring the thing’s constant wailing, *honestly* why couldn’t it shut up?

*I can’t take care of him. His name is Tubbo. Please take care of him.*

There was no indicator of who the note came from, and Schlatt couldn’t even begin to attempt to recall any pretty brunettes with green wings in town. Whoever dropped the baby

off clearly hadn't known who lived in this house, or they wouldn't have dared leave their baby there.

The baby was still crying, and Schlatt opened his mouth to tell the stupid thing to shut up-- Schlatt felt sick.

When had he become so much like her? When had he become a drunk idiot who yelled at innocent babies? When had he become so bitter to the world?

The baby—*Tubbo*, Schlatt recalled—was still crying, and Schlatt quickly held the boy more carefully, rocking him back and forth. You did that with babies, right?

“Hey, hey, calm down,” Schlatt said, trying not to panic, “Uh, what do babies like? Uh... hush little baby, don't say a word, um... i don't know the rest of the words...”

To Schlatt and his headache's immense relief, Tubbo stopped crying, staring up at Schlatt. His big brown eyes seemed to be staring into Schlatt's soul, and Schlatt found himself melting.

His mother's voice reverberated from inside the house.

“What's all that racket?!”

Schlatt flinched. And Tubbo began crying again.

That day, Schlatt moved out. He found a place in the capital of the Antarctic Empire. He went sober, which was done by the side of many professional doctors with healing magic.

Schlatt vowed to never use his magic again. He was *not* going to get drunk again. Not when he had a two-month old.

When that fell through, *because damn repressing magic hurt like hell*, Schlatt decided to start a business, taking a small leaf out of his mother's book. He sold the wine he created to rich and poor people alike.

He had expected the business to be small, simple. As it turned out, Schlatt soon found himself seeped in enough money for him to buy his own manor.

It was tempting too.

That all changed when someone tried to kidnap Tubbo and sell him for ransom when he was barely a year old.

That scared the *hell* out of Schlatt. He had already experienced a couple of run-ins with a few men trying to steal his feathers (and who wouldn't with such a profitable power), but *Tubbo*? That's where Schlatt drew his line.



So, Schlatt packed up. He left his business to Quackity, a nice enough dude, promising to send him feathers when he could. Fortunately, they had already started growing some vineyards (because relying on a single person's power for a business was pure stupidity), so hopefully the business would stay afloat. If not, Schlatt had plenty of gold to support himself and Tubbo for years.

Schlatt could already imagine the gossip though. *Sixteen-year-old nobody makes a name for himself in a major wine business before disappearing without a trace a year later.*

He didn't particularly care, but the idea was pretty funny.

Schlatt moved to a small town near the outskirts of the Antarctic Empire, got a nice cottage, and hoped for a peaceful life for him and his son.

He would be better than both his stupid black-born father *and* his abusive mother.

When Tubbo turned three, Schlatt took him outside and carefully pressed a feather into his hand.

"I'm going to learn my magic?" Tubbo had asked very carefully, seeming almost nervous at the thought of crushing the green feather in his hand.

"Yeah," Schlatt said, smiling encouragingly, "Won't that be cool?"

Tubbo hesitated, his wings bristling agitatedly. "What if it hurts you?"

Schlatt's heart broke. Kids should be excited to discover their new power, not worried that they'll hurt their parents.

"Tubs, I promise that it won't hurt me directly," Schlatt said, "And if your magic does hurt me, I'll know it was an accident. It'll be fine."

Tubbo frowned and stared at the feather in his hand. "Some older kids were talking about people who have powers that kill people," he whispered, "What if I kill you?"

Schlatt was going to *kill* those older kids. Later. Now, he ran his hands up and down Tubbo's arms soothingly.

"You won't," Schlatt promised, "Those people are called black-borns. Their wings are black. Your wings are greener than the grass beneath our feet."

Tubbo visibly relaxed, smiling slightly. "Okay."

Schlatt nodded. "Okay. Go whenever you're ready, baby."

Tubbo took a deep breath, shut his eyes, and crushed the feather in his palm. It dissolved into green dust, and Tubbo let out a small gasp, snapping his eyes open.

“It feels tingly,” he said, staring at his hand, even if there was no visible difference.

Schlatt laughed. “Yeah, that’s your magic. Try touching things with your hand.”

Tubbo still seemed nervous about touching Schlatt, so Schlatt gestured to the ground. Tubbo carefully crouched down and brushed his fingers against the virtually non-existent grass (winter was not kind to even the outskirts of the Antarctic Empire); he let out an excited yelp when the grass suddenly grew fast and green.

“It grew!” he exclaimed.

Schlatt laughed. His son’s magic *grew* things. His son’s magic *created* and didn’t destroy.

Tubbo wanted to make a garden almost instantly. Schlatt helped him as he eagerly grew different flowers and vegetables, and Schlatt actually had to force Tubbo to stop before he ripped his wings bare of feathers, which was the last thing anyone needed.

Tubbo needed some feathers left over for flying, after all.

*He’d never forget the joy on Tubbo’s face as he lifted himself off the ground for the first time.*

As the years passed, the other kids in the town started to bully Tubbo for his love of gardening and his poor reading skills. Schlatt was already teaching Tubbo everything he knew, but he hated how his son was growing more and more distant from everyone in his generation.

Tubbo needed *friends*.

So maybe that was why Schlatt was so open to a kid Tubbo’s age who Schlatt had *never* seen before. He must’ve moved there recently, and Schlatt decided that he wasn’t going to question the kid too much.

Now Schlatt wasn’t stupid. The kid, Tommy, flinched too much. He was too skinny. He wore a cloak over his wings like he had something to hide.

But Schlatt didn’t want to question it. Schlatt didn’t want to turn away the only friend Tubbo has managed to make in *years*. So Schlatt ignored the signs. Schlatt stayed as welcoming as possible. Schlatt didn’t encourage the possibility that the kid had a *reason* to hide his wings like the plague.

Especially when the kid was so small, so scared, so unsure.

Honestly, he reminded Schlatt a little of himself, before he drowned himself in booze.

Maybe that was why Schlatt chased him when he ran away as night fell. Maybe it was the broken look on Tubbo’s face. Regardless, Schlatt chased down the poor kid and found him suffering from magic repression in the middle of the road.

After carefully taking Tommy into his arms, Schlatt quickly pressed one of his own red feathers into the boy's hand, trying to ignore Tommy's muttering, *pleading* with someone, not hearing Schlatt's own begging for the kid to return to the present.

"I'm sorry," the kid whispered, sounding like he was afraid for his life, "I'm sorry, please, I don't want to die, I don't want to kill him, please why do I have to kill him?"

What had this kid been through?

Tommy had already crushed the feather in his hand, so Schlatt quickly pulled a bottle of water from his hand and pressed it against Tommy's fingers. The water instantly turned to wine, and Schlatt was relieved to see Tommy visibly sag in relief.

Magic repression hurt like crap. Schlatt knew how *wonderful* it felt to finally let some of his magic out after being in all that pain.

Tommy still looked like he was living in his own personal nightmare, however.

"*Tommy*, kid can you hear me?" Schlatt said, allowing some panic to bleed into his voice.

Tommy's face flickered, and Schlatt noted with relief that he had at least snapped Tommy out of the nightmare or flashback or whatever it was.

"Sam?" Tommy whispered, practically begged. It was the second time Schlatt had heard that name today.

Schlatt's heart went out to this poor kid who only wanted comfort from someone who Schlatt could not provide.

"Sorry, kid," Schlatt said.

When Tommy began panicking, clearly thinking that Schlatt had used Tommy's feathers instead of his own, Schlatt began to connect the dots.

The reason Tommy hid his wings. The reason Tommy had a flashback or nightmare about being forced to kill his friend. The reason Tommy was so sure he had destroyed something or someone.

Tommy was *black-born*, something Schlatt should despise, something Schlatt should fear.

But Schlatt suddenly remembered a conversation he had a little over ten years ago with a kid a little younger than Tommy and Tubbo were now.

Schlatt was nearly seventeen when the third prince was born to the Antarctic Empire.

Not much was said about him; the naming ceremony had been moved back a couple of months.

Schlatt wasn't all that surprised. Rumors of Dream being active nearby were running rampant, and putting a brand-new baby in a public setting when the Empire's worst enemy was potentially nearby would've been stupid.

But one day, while Schlatt was out and about with a four-month-old Tubbo in his arms, a kid with bushy brown hair walked up to him with an air of superiority that did not match his middle-class clothing.

Schlatt judged was nine-years-old tops. Made sense. Nine-year-olds were little craps.

After this quick judgement, Schlatt was expecting to be bossed around or bragged too or something like that. The *last* thing Schlatt expected was for the first words out of the kid's mouth to be,

"My baby brother is black-born."

Schlatt blinked. He was inclined to assume the kid was joking, but the kid was giving him a defiant stare that could make armies tremble.

Schlatt hated black-borns as much as anybody else, but he vowed not to be like his mother. So instead of slandering this kid's brother right off the bat, he just decided to say,

"Is that so?"

"Yes," the kid said tersely, "And he is the most beautiful baby anyone has ever seen. He laughs when I play with him, and he is *not* evil."

Schlatt had half a mind to argue with him, black-borns were dangerous, but...

Could Schlatt really argue? Could Schlatt really condemn this kid for loving his little brother? Could Schlatt really condemn a *baby* for being born with black wings? If Tubbo, who was currently sleeping in his arms, had black wings, would Schlatt had cast him aside without a second glance?

The thought made Schlatt feel sick. He didn't argue.

"If you say so," he said with a shrug, "You would know better than me. It's not like *I've* met your brother."

The kid scowled. "I'm not sure you heard me correctly. I said he was black-born."

"I know," Schlatt said, "But if you say that he's a nice kid, who am I to argue?"

The kid's mouth opened slightly, probably in shock. How many people had this kid declared his brother's status to? How many people had reacted like Schlatt did?

Not many, if the beam that spread across the kid's face was anything to go by.

"I like you," he said, "I'll be sure to tell my father about you."

Schlatt raised his eyebrows. “And who’s your father?”

The kid’s grin was a lot more mischievous now. “The king,” he said, holding his hand out for a shake, “I’m Wilbur, by the way.”

*You have got to be kidding me.*

Forgetting about all the proper formalities, Schlatt mutely shook Prince Wilbur’s hand. Prince Wilbur only grinned all the wider for it.

It wasn’t until Prince Wilbur had dashed out of sight that Schlatt realized the implications of the conversation.

The new prince was *black-born*.

Schlatt didn’t even want to *think* about the implications of that one.

When the prince was declared missing, Schlatt prayed to Prime that he actually went missing instead of being killed for the political problems his wings would cause.

Now, Schlatt wasn’t considering that this kid could be the missing prince. That was so far-fetched that Schlatt would laugh at anyone who even *considered* believing it. Sure, Tommy would be the right age for it, but the chances were slim to impossible.

What he *was* considering was that Prince Wilbur might’ve actually had a point about the “black-borns weren’t inherently evil” point. Especially when Tommy had done nothing but be afraid and kind the entire time he was with Schlatt.

So, Schlatt brought Tommy back to his house. Tubbo hugged Tommy so tightly that Schlatt knew he had made the right choice.

And then Tommy didn’t know how to nest, and Schlatt’s heart *shattered*.

Nesting was such a vital part of living, such a vital part of getting a decent night’s sleep, and Tommy had never done it *once*?

That’s when Schlatt realized that Tommy’s childhood had been some sort of convoluted hell where he was expected to kill his friends, and sleep without a nest, and live in so much fear of his father that he couldn’t even utter his name.

“*Prime*, kid,” Schlatt had whispered, filled with raw horror, “You... you really got the short end of the stick, didn’t you?”

And then Tommy had tried to explain that he didn’t *need* to know how to nest.

Schlatt went to get Tubbo.

“Tubbo,” he said quietly, peeking through Tubbo’s door.

“Yeah?” Tubbo asked sleepily, sitting up from his nest.

“Can I talk to you about something?”

Tubbo sleepily replied in the affirmative, and Schlatt stepped into Tubbo’s bedroom, shutting the door behind him. He sat down in front of Tubbo.

“Listen,” Schlatt said, “Tommy doesn’t know how to nest.”

Tubbo’s eyes widened. “What? How—”

“I don’t know.” Schlatt’s wings bristled in agitation or worry or something. It didn’t really matter. “I do know that Tommy’s been through a lot, so don’t ask him too many questions, okay?”

Tubbo nodded. “Come to think of it, I don’t think he knew what bees were earlier.”

*Prime*, if Tommy kept this up, Schlatt's heart would be nothing but ground up dust.

“Yeah, just, explain anything that needs to be explained, alright?” Schlatt ruffled Tubbo’s hair. Tubbo let out a small giggle. “I know you would do that anyway, but I have to say these things.”

Tubbo nodded, tilting his head slightly. “Do you want me to help Tommy with his nest?”

Schlatt smiled. “That would be great.”

Tubbo eagerly leapt to his feet, his wings flapping slightly behind him as he left the room. Schlatt loved his son’s wings, but they currently served as a reminder of Tommy’s, which were still dangerously tucked away underneath his cloak.

If Tommy didn’t stretch those wings soon, there was going to be lasting damage.

After about an hour, Schlatt peeked into Tommy’s bedroom to see Tubbo and Tommy sleeping on top of each other.

He really hoped that Tommy would stay for more than one night. Prime knew that the kids needed each other.

## Chapter End Notes

Hello, hello, I hope you enjoyed Schlatt's pov. I hope you enjoyed Wilbur.

I drew a [picture](#) of Tommy on Tumblr for this au.

Anyway, thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments! <3



# Chapter 4

## Chapter Summary

Preening somehow got angsty.

Like... really angsty.

And oh look, Wilbur's here too.

## Chapter Notes

tw: trauma, ptsd, emotional manipulation, referenced murder, discrimination, referenced child abuse, referenced kidnapping

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Waking up was a bit of a routine with Tommy.

Every morning, Tommy would snap his eyes open, expecting to see the darkness of his room and instead seeing the brightness of the morning sun. He would bask in it a little bit before eating a little something and going back on the move, getting as far away from his old home as possible.

*Away from his father.*

Already, Tommy's routine was disrupted by the weight on his shoulder and the very distinct *lack* of morning sky above him.

Instead there were dark walls; the weight on him was warm, but Tommy felt suddenly very cold. Had his father found him? Had he brought him back? No, no, Tommy couldn't be here, he couldn't be here, not again, please *not again*.

"Tommy?" a voice asked, sounding a little groggy.

That didn't sound like Sam. And his father *never* called him Tommy.

"Tommy, are you alright?"

Tommy looked to the sound of the voice and blinked when he saw the person sitting next to him. Their green wings weren't the same color as Sam's or his father's, and Tommy tried to place where he knew this person from.



And the memories from yesterday began filtering through. Meeting Tubbo at the market. Schlatt. One more night.

“Tubbo?” Tommy asked, not entirely sure if this was real.

Tubbo smiled, his wings and shoulders both sagging. “Yep,” he said brightly, “You scared me there for a minute, man.”

Most of Tommy wanted to curl in on himself, to mumble apologies and beg for forgiveness.

But that was the old Tommy, and Tommy didn’t want anything to do with him. He had already acted fairly humiliatingly the other day, and Tommy didn’t want Schlatt to think he was *weak* or anything.

He could be useful. He could help.

Then Tommy realized that he was leaving today, so there was no use in being useful to begin with.

Why did a small part of him feel heavy at the thought? He should *want* to leave. He would be endangering everyone here by staying. He had already endangered Tubbo enough.

*“Kill him.”*

Tommy clenched his fists tightly, not caring that his nails were digging painfully into his palms.

“Are you alright?” Tubbo asked for the second time in the short length of time they had both been awake.

Tommy felt heat rise up to his cheeks, and this time he *did* curl in on himself. He couldn’t even make conversation right.

“Yeah,” he said, he forced himself to straighten and made his tone louder, “Yeah, I was just thinking. You know me, I’ve got... big thoughts.”

Tubbo laughed the same way Sam might, and Tommy felt himself relax a little bit.

Tubbo made a tired noise as he stretched his wings out and leaned back, clearly getting the stiffness out of his muscles. Tommy’s wings twitched in jealousy, but Tommy held them back. Schlatt might know about his wings, but Tubbo didn’t. Tommy would prefer to keep it that way.

Besides, he would be leaving in about an hour. There was plenty of time to stretch his wings out then.

Tubbo stood up. “I think Dad’s making breakfast,” he remarked, like Schlatt always made breakfast at this hour.

Maybe he did. It was kind of strange though. Tommy's father only ever had Tommy be given food based on how good Tommy had been that day. Had Tubbo been good? How did he know?

Then again, Schlatt was strange. Or, at least, different from Tommy's father. Maybe he just made food for Tubbo regardless of how good he had been. Didn't they have dinner earlier? Yeah, but Tubbo had delivered the watermelon, and that was good.

Tommy's brain was so mixed up he could barely sift past all of the thoughts. Why did everything have to be so *damn complicated*?

Tommy let out a small gasp as Tubbo took him by the hand, and Tubbo let go immediately.

Was it wrong that Tommy craved the touch?

Yes. Tommy was too dangerous to touch. He could hurt someone on accident. The only person who could touch him was his father, because his father had feathers to protect against that.

Tubbo furrowed his eyebrows. "You should probably stop thinking so hard," he informed him, "It looks like it's making you unhappy."

Tommy forced out a small scoff, standing up. "I'm always unhappy," he deadpanned.

Tubbo looked mortified at that. "Oh no! Is there any way I can help? Maybe the food will make you feel better, or—"

Tommy raised his hands placatingly, silencing Tubbo. "I was just joking," he lied.

He hadn't really been joking, but it was clearly making Tubbo upset, and he didn't want to make Tubbo upset, because he liked Tubbo, and Tubbo didn't need to worry about his problems anyway, the less Tubbo knew the better, and—

"Oh," Tubbo said, breaking Tommy out of his thoughts, "Come on, then, I think I can smell eggs."

Come to think of it, Tommy could smell *something* coming from the lower floor of the house. It smelled *amazing*.

"Okay," he said, following Tubbo down the stairs and into the kitchen. The amazing smell was stronger over here, and Tommy's mouth was watering shamefully. Sure enough, Schlatt was hovering over some metal-fire thing, and he was holding a sizzling pan over it.

Tommy followed Tubbo as he looked over Schlatt's shoulder. There seemed to be a golden mushy substance in the pan, and Tommy balked. This was for eating? It looked like fungi that crawled on dead logs.

"Good morning boys," Schlatt said, "The eggs will be ready in a second."

"Those are eggs?" Tommy demanded incredulously.

He clapped a hand over his mouth instantly after he said it. He asked a question, and to make matters worse, he asked it *rudely*, and Schlatt has been nothing but kind to him, and he had to *screw it up, and now he was going to be kicked out*—

Schlatt laughed. Tommy flinched, shutting his eyes shut. He felt pathetic. He *was* pathetic.

“They don’t exactly look like it, do they?” Schlatt asked. He didn’t sound angry.

Someone placed a hand on Tommy’s shoulder, and Tommy flinched away. The hand left again, and Tommy hated himself for wanting it back.

“*Selfish.*”

Tommy forced himself to open his eyes and lower his hand away from his mouth. Schlatt had focused his attention back on the eggs, and Tubbo was standing in front of Tommy

“You’ll like eggs,” Tubbo said calmly, like it was perfectly normal to know someone who was so *stupid* that they didn’t even know what *eggs* looked like. “They’re scrambled, so they don’t look like the eggs you might see at the market.”

Oh. That made... more sense than before. Tommy tried to release some of the tension in his body, as he nodded.

“You kids can sit down,” Schlatt said calmly, “These are just about done.”

Tommy nodded obediently, and Tubbo was already hastening to the seat he sat at yesterday. Tubbo was eagerly gesturing to the seat next to him, which also happened to be the seat *Tommy* sat at yesterday, so Tommy sat down there.

Schlatt placed two plates of steaming golden eggs, which still smelled delicious but looked suspiciously gross, in front of them. Tubbo immediately took his fork and began eating, but Tommy approached the meal with more caution, carefully holding his fork in his hand and poking at the mushy substance.

“You don’t have to like it,” Schlatt informed him, sitting down at the table with his own plate, “but you might want to try it first.”

Tommy nodded quickly, grimacing at his rudeness. Schlatt had offered him a place to stay for the night and *fed* him, and now Tommy was being rude?

Tommy quickly shoveled up a large bite of eggs onto his fork and shoved it into his mouth.

*Prime*, that was good.

Good didn’t even begin to describe how amazing this food was. It was *delicious*. No, not delicious, *divine*. It came down from the heavens.

“Good, right?” Tubbo asked thickly, his mouth still full of *heavenly egg substance*.

How could Tommy have ever thought this to be gross?

Within five minutes, the eggs were long gone from both of their plates, and Schlatt began clearing the table.

“Alright,” he said, dumping the dishes into a metal bin, “You two get dressed and then we can preen before lessons.”

Tommy froze.

“*Then you can get preened,*” his father had said, resting a hand on the back of Tommy’s neck, “*Wouldn’t you like that?*”

Tommy didn’t want to get preened. He didn’t want to have any more blood on his hands. He thought this place was *different*. Who was Schlatt going to ask him to kill? Where were they hiding? Was there some secret basement underneath here?

Tommy needed to get out of here.

“Tommy?” Tubbo asked, tugging on Tommy’s cloak, “What’s wrong?”

Tommy struggled to form the words. “Pr-preening,” he muttered, standing up quickly. Tubbo stood up with him. “I... I don’t want that.”

Schlatt looked *surprised*, like he expected Tommy to just lean into the thought of feeling the wonderful feeling of preening, of melting into the touch, like he just expected Tommy to be *fine* with murder because he promised preening afterward.

Tommy used to be that person, but not anymore. Preening was *bad*.

Schlatt still hadn’t said anything, but there was a frown on his face, which meant that Tommy screwed up again. But Tommy couldn’t even bring himself to care, because he was *not* staying here if that meant more killing.

None of this made sense. They were so *nice* before.

“Preening is just straightening feathers,” Tubbo explained, “It’s nothing to be afraid of.”

“I know what preening is,” Tommy snapped. Tubbo winced, and Tommy flinched. “I just... it’s not... I... don’t...”

Prime, he couldn’t even speak anymore.

Schlatt walked around the table and crouched down to be eye-level with Tommy. Tommy flinched away from the eye-contact, but Schlatt didn’t move to touch him.

“Tommy,” he asked slowly, “This is a very important question, so I’m going to need you to be honest with me.”

Tommy nodded, wondering why he hadn’t left yet. These people were no different from his father and yet he was *still* standing here as if he were hoping for some better explanation.

“When is the last time your feathers were preened?”

Tommy straightened at the words, glaring at Schlatt. “Two months,” he said resolutely, “And I never intend to have them preened again. I thought you were different, but if you want me to kill—”

Schlatt’s face twisted so that it was indecipherable, and Tommy clammed up.

“You don’t have to kill anyone,” Schlatt said, his voice strangely warm, “That’s not what preening is about.”

But... Tommy had always killed someone. That was part of preening, right? Once he had asked his father about his wings being uncomfortable.

*“We can preen in a minute, Thomas,”* he had said. A minute later, a man was dragged into the room. *“Kill him and you can be preened.”*

A shiver went down Tommy’s spine, and he shuddered.

“Yes, it is,” Tommy said, wondering if Schlatt was trying to trick him, “That’s how it works. You kill someone and then you get preened.”

Tubbo let out a small gasp, and Tommy winced, trying to ignore the tears that were beginning to build up in his eyes.

“We don’t do that here,” Schlatt said instantly, “I promise you, we don’t do that here.”

“What do you do then?” Tommy demanded. He hugged himself, because nothing made sense anymore, but preening was always after *something*, so what did Schlatt and Tubbo do?

“We eat breakfast,” Tubbo said, his voice wavering slightly, “We eat breakfast and then we preen.”

Schlatt smiled slightly. “Yeah, what he said.”

Tommy blinked, the lump in his throat expanding. “That’s it?” His voice cracked embarrassingly at the words.

Schlatt nodded. “Yep, that’s it.”

Tears began to slip down Tommy’s cheeks, and Tubbo wrapped his arms around Tommy carefully. That only made Tommy let out a pitiful gasping sob, because it felt *so good*, and he knew he shouldn’t be allowing it.

He didn’t pull away from the hug, but he didn’t hug back either. He didn’t trust himself not to hurt Tubbo. He didn’t want to hurt Tubbo. Tubbo was so damn *nice*.

“Oh, *kid*,” Schlatt sighed, his own eyes gleaming as he rubbed Tommy’s shoulder gently, “Let’s get that cloak off, yeah?”

Tommy lifted his fingers to the clasp, but he hesitated. Tubbo still hadn't seen his wings... but he had heard Tommy talk about killing people, so he supposed it didn't make much of a difference anymore.

Tubbo let go of Tommy, and Tommy forced himself not to reach out for Tubbo to come back. Tubbo was just so *warm*, and Tommy felt so *cold*.

Schlatt was still looking at him patiently, and even Tubbo was looking at Tommy with some sort of curiosity.

Tommy took a deep breath, shut his eyes tightly, and undid the clasp of his cloak, allowing it to fall to the ground with a muffled thump.

As expected, Tubbo made a strange, startled sound. Schlatt made a noise himself, which was strange, because he had already known that Tommy was black-born. Was it just weird to see the wings in proper lighting? Or was there something else?

Tommy slowly moved to stretch out his wings for the first time for probably an entire day. Pain shot through them, and Tommy flinched, opening his eyes.

Tubbo was staring at Tommy's wings, and Schlatt was too. Okay, so his wings might look a bit of a mess, but he knew that wasn't why they were staring.

"Okay," Schlatt said slowly, "Yeah, you definitely need preening." He began walking to the living area Tommy had noticed earlier. "Come on."

Tommy obediently followed Schlatt, and Tubbo walked ahead, tugging Schlatt by the shirt. Schlatt gave Tubbo a smile, and Tubbo seemed to relax significantly.

Weird.

"You can sit right here," Tubbo said, gesturing to a part of the rug, "I'll preen Dad while he preens you."

Tommy nodded and sat on the rug obediently. Schlatt sat behind him, and Tubbo sat behind Schlatt.

Tommy felt himself tense with Schlatt sitting behind him. His father had never truly done anything bad while preening, but Schlatt could still hurt him.

"Okay," Schlatt said gently, "I'm going to start by straightening your feathers and taking away the ones that are over-bent, okay? I'll try not to damage any, but your feathers are pretty brittle right now."

Tommy took a deep breath and nodded. He felt Schlatt's fingers begin to straighten his feathers, and Tommy *melted*.

It felt so good. It felt *amazing*. Tommy had forgotten how much he had missed this wonderful feeling, like someone had put him near a warm fire in the winter, like the first time Sam

smuggled Tommy hot-chocolate, like someone was holding him warm and promising to never leave.

*“It feels good, doesn’t it?”*

“Alright.” Schlatt’s voice still sounded gentle. “Can you try to stretch your wings out for me? I’m going to see if I can’t loosen the stiffness.”

Tommy swallowed. It had hurt the last time he tried to stretched his wings, but Schlatt wanted him too, and he had already made him feel *so good*. Maybe he would fix the pain.

Tommy slowly stretched out his wings as far as he could manage.

“Great job.”

Tommy’s chest grew warm at the praise. Finally, he was doing something *right*.

Schlatt’s fingers started gently massaging the muscles in Tommy’s wings, and Tommy slowly started to feel them loosen.

Tommy was crying again. He tried to quickly wipe away the tears, but it was too late.

Schlatt gently rubbed circles into Tommy’s back. “It’s okay, kid,” he murmured, “You can let it all out.”

Tommy *wailed*.

That same morning, about a hundred miles away, the door to the king’s study was burst open, and Prince Wilbur strode into the room with all the authority of a nineteen-year-old prince.

“Dream’s been sighted,” he said, slamming the report onto the king’s desk. Wilbur’s gold wings were fluffed in aggravation. “But you already knew that, didn’t you?”

King Phil looked up from his work to Wilbur. Dark eyebags hung under his eyes.

“I’m sending scouts to track him,” he said, “I didn’t want you to rush into things.”

“Rush into things?” Wilbur demanded, “Rush into things? He took Thomas; he might know where he is! We need to—”

Phil stood up, allowing his gray wings to stretch their full span. “You aren’t doing anything,” he said, a dangerous undertone in his voice, “I refuse to let you—”

“Let me do what?” Wilbur demanded, infuriated, “Avenge my baby brother? Try to find him?”

“Thomas is dead,” Phil said, tears choking his voice, “You and I both know this.”

Wilbur ran his hand through his hair in frustration. Why didn't he understand? "You don't *know* that."

"It's been eleven years," Phil reminded Wilbur, "Even if he's not dead, the chances of us seeing him again are next to nothing."

Wilbur shook his head. "You're not listening," he said, his voice bordering on frantic, "We can find him. We can save him. Dream has him, I know he does, why won't you let me—"

"The answer is *no*, Wilbur!" Phil shouted, "I refuse to lose you to that monster!"

Wilbur shut his mouth, his jaw working back and forth angrily. "Fine," he said coldly, "I apologize for bothering you, your *majesty*."

With a bow, Wilbur left the room without another word or second glance.

Phil wouldn't give him permission to track down Dream? That was fine. Wilbur didn't need his permission anyway.

Dream would rue the day he ever decided to mess with *his* baby brother.

## Chapter End Notes

Tommy's lore stream on Monday prevented me from updating because I was so busy writing a one-shot, so sorry for that.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed the hurt/comfort.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments! <3



# Chapter 5

## Chapter Summary

Schlatt receives some bad news. Tommy is sad. Tubbo is also sad.

## Chapter Notes

Tw: implied/referenced child abuse, implied/referenced murder, implied teenage pregnancy, referenced alcoholism, think that's it

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy would like the record to show that he *could*, in fact, read, write, and do difficult math problems.

Well, some of the math problems Schlatt was showing to Tommy and Tubbo were a *little* harder than Tommy was accustomed to, but that was fine. Tommy could do this. Tommy *needed* to do this.

But he could not for the life of him figure out *why* they even had to figure out the equation for the line in the first place.

“This is a bit advanced stuff,” Schlatt said calmly, as if Tommy weren’t an utter *failure* in this particular lesson, as if Tommy couldn’t even do *one thing*. Schlatt stood up. “It should’ve occurred to me that Tubbo’s at a higher level than you in math. I’ll get some of the older books.”

Tommy’s freshly preened wings puffed up indignantly, and it still felt weird to have them out in the open like this. Sure, he would get rid of the cloak when he was alone on the road, but even then, it was only for hours at a time. Roads were used by other people too, and Tommy would rather not be spotted.

“No,” he said, a desperate edge to his voice, “I can do this. I just... need a little more time.”

Tubbo looked up from his own equation. “I can help if you want,” he said.

Tommy sighed but nodded. “Fine.”

Tubbo perked up and scooted his chair closer to Tommy’s. “See, you have to imagine that someone is climbing a hill...”

At the end of Tubbo's explanation, the only thing Tommy managed to understand was that if the line was going up the slope was positive, and if the line was going down, the slope was negative.

Tears of frustration burned at Tommy's eyes, and he quickly swallowed them back. He could figure this out. He *could*.

"Tommy," Schlatt said, his voice still sounding stupidly patient, "You don't have to figure this out. This is pretty advanced stuff for an eleven-year-old. Heck, when I was your age, I didn't know half of this stuff."

"I *should* be able to do it," Tommy protested, "It's simple, but I just..."

He was too stupid. He was a failure. He couldn't manage to solve this simple equation, even though Tubbo had no trouble at all with it.

"How about this," Schlatt offered, "You and Tubbo can be done for the day and go out to the garden. I'll have lunch ready."

Tommy curled in on himself. Now he was holding Tubbo back because of his own stupidity.

To Tommy's surprise, however, Tubbo cheered. "Thanks, Dad!" he exclaimed, hopping out of his chair and giving Schlatt a hug.

Schlatt chuckled, ruffling Tubbo's hair. "No problem, Tubs."

Tommy had long decided before now that this place was very strange.

Tubbo turned to Tommy, smiling brightly. "Come on, Tommy!" he said as he moved toward the door.

Tommy sighed and got out of his chair, grabbing his cloak off of the back of it. He was loath to put a cloak back over his wings now that he had gotten accustomed to having his wings free to move around again, but Tommy didn't have much of a choice. The garden wasn't exactly what one would call walled-off, and anybody could see him from there.

Tommy sadly did the silver clasp around his neck and arranged the cloak so that his wings were properly hidden.

Schlatt frowned. "We've got to find a better way to hide those wings," he muttered, "Especially in the summer like this."

Tommy shrugged. Had he done something wrong? Did Schlatt not want him to wear the cloak? But he had to wear the cloak, it was his only protection against strangers...

"Sorry," he whispered.

Schlatt looked startled, and he smiled. "Don't worry about it, kid," he said, "I'll figure something out. It's not like it's your fault."

Tommy wasn't sure what to make of that, but he wasn't sure what to make of most things Schlatt said.

"Oh," he said lamely.

Tubbo peeked his head back inside. "Tommy?" he asked, sounding nervous, "Are you coming?"

Tommy jumped slightly, his wings flapping a tiny bit underneath his cloak. "Yeah," he said, "Yeah, I'm coming."

Schlatt gave him another smile and nodded, as if he were giving Tommy permission to go outside. For some reason, Tommy relaxed and followed Tubbo out the door.

Schlatt sighed, sinking into his chair.

On the bright side, Tommy hadn't left yet, which gave Schlatt hope that Tommy might choose not to leave today.

On the darker side of things, this kid had so many layers of trauma that even the kid *himself* didn't realize it.

The whole preening situation had been horrific. The fact that whoever raised Tommy had conditioned him into believing that he only got preened after he killed someone, that that was part of the *process*, was disgusting, almost the stuff of nightmares.

Schlatt really wished he could find Tommy's guardian and give him a few pieces of his mind.

Loud knocking suddenly emerged from the front door, and Schlatt jumped, his wings flaring out in surprise. He hadn't been expecting any visitors today. Was it Tommy's father? Had he come for him?

Schlatt sighed, massaging his racing heart. He was being ridiculous. Tommy's father would probably be knocking *much* more violently than the simple rapping on the door.

Schlatt walked to the front door and opened it slowly. He relaxed when he saw who it was.

"Hey, Schlatt," Puffy said, her white wings looking tense, "How have you been?"

Schlatt sighed. "You know, I've had an interesting couple of days. Do you want to come inside?"

Puffy smiled, but it looked strained. "Yeah. Is Tubbo in?"

Schlatt shook his head, opening the door so that Puffy could step fully inside the house. "Nah, he's playing out in his garden."

Puffy nodded. “Good, that’s good,” she muttered, “Probably for the best with what I’m about to tell you.”

Well, that didn’t sound particularly good. While Puffy knew how to be serious when she needed to be, she wasn’t particularly one to actually *go* to Schlatt’s house to tell him something. Normally, she found that she could wait for Schlatt’s visits to *her*.

Oh yeah, Puffy was Schlatt’s therapist, if that was worth mentioning. Apparently, years of child abuse, and then years of alcohol abuse, followed by taking care of an infant starting at age sixteen wasn’t actually good for the psyche.

“Why don’t we sit down?” Schlatt offered as they walked into the living room, “Do you want some coffee? I have some leftover from this morning.”

Puffy shook her head, sinking into the couch cushions. “I just want to get this over with,” she admitted.

Schlatt nodded, sitting down in a nearby chair. “Okay,” he said, “What do you want to tell me?”

Puffy sighed, looking Schlatt straight in the eyes. “Dream’s been sighted nearby.”

Yeah, it was a really good thing that Schlatt wasn’t holding a mug of coffee, because he would’ve dropped it and caused the liquid to pour all over his rug.

As it was, Schlatt felt every muscle inside his body tense, and his feathers puffed up.

“*What?*” he demanded, “How do you know? When was this?”

“Yesterday,” Puffy admitted, “According to some travelers, he’s been going from town to town, apparently searching for something.”

“Are we *sure* it was Dream, though?” Schlatt asked, holding onto the slightest chance that the most dangerous man on the continent was *not* near his home, “Are we sure it just wasn’t some dude that happened to look like him?”

Puffy’s lips formed a thin line. “Their descriptions really leave no room for doubt,” she said, “I mean, who else would be stupid enough to wear a smiley-face mask with neon-green wings?”

Schlatt hated that she was right. Nobody would be that stupid, unless they were intentionally trying to cause trouble.

“How close was he?” Schlatt asked, massaging his nose.

“A couple towns over,” Puffy said, “But he’s definitely heading in our direction.”

“And do you have any idea what he’s looking for?”

Puffy leaned forward, clasping her hands together. “Actually, apparently it’s not a *what*. ” She shut her eyes tightly. “It’s *who*. ”

Schlatt swore.

“What poor soul is being chased down by *Dream*?” Schlatt demanded, “Who does Dream want badly enough that he’s *showing* himself out in the open?”

Dream was kind of known for sowing the seeds of doubt and chaos, but typically he showed his face in two towns for about one second so that rumors and doubt could spread throughout the kingdom like a wildfire. Rarely did he have consistent appearances with an obvious goal like this.

“From what I’ve heard,” Puffy said, “He’s looking for a kid.”

Schlatt’s mind instantly went to Tubbo. Then it went to Tommy.

“Yeah?” he asked, trying to keep the trembling out of his voice, “Any reason for that?”

“Dream’s not exactly nearby,” Puffy scoffed, “I can’t exactly use my magic on him here and now to figure out his motivations.”

Schlatt nodded. “Fair enough,” he sighed, leaning down and massaging the bridge of his nose, “But what I mean is if there’s any reason we think he’s looking for a child?”

Schlatt knew he was in denial; that didn’t mean he wasn’t going to hold onto every small glimmer of hope that this all was a huge misunderstanding.

“Other than the fact that he was openly asking for one?” Puffy asked, raising her eyebrows, “He nearly killed a family.”

Schlatt jumped. “He *what*?” he asked, his wings stretching out to their full span, nearly knocking a lamp off of the table, “You didn’t think to mention that sooner?”

“I was going to lead up to it,” Puffy said calmly, “I’m surprised you haven’t heard; everyone else in town knows.”

Schlatt forced himself to calm down, folding his wings again as he sat back down. “I’ve been somewhat preoccupied,” he admitted, “But that’s not the point. Tell me more about nearly killing a family business.”

“Apparently, Dream’s not looking for any child,” Puffy said, “He’s looking for a black-born.”

*Prime*, no.

It all made sense now. It *all* made sense.

The reason Tommy was conditioned to kill. The reason Tommy was so afraid of being hurt. The reason Tommy couldn’t even speak his father’s *name*.

Schlatt wasn't breathing. He forced himself to take a deep breath.

"Are you okay?" Puffy asked, looking at him with concern.

"I'm fine." Schlatt ran his fingers through his hair. "Just... keep going with the... *killing* family thing."

"*Nearly* killing," Puffy corrected with a grimace, "He nearly killed them because he thought he was housing the child. When he realized that they had kicked him out instead, he slightly maimed them."

"*Prime*, Puffy," Schlatt moaned, "That's barely any better. What am I supposed to do?"

If he kicked Tommy out now, Tubbo would be hurt. If he kept Tommy, Tubbo would be killed. The only alternative was to hand Tommy straight over to Dream, and that was unthinkable.

"I think you're safe," Puffy said calmly, "He hasn't been bothering anyone who hasn't been involved. So, unless you've taken in any black-born children, then I think... Schlatt, what are you doing?"

Schlatt had gotten to his feet, pacing slightly frantically. There was only one other option, only one other thing he could do.

"I need to go the capital," he muttered, "We need to go to the capital."

Puffy stood up, raising her hands calmly. "Schlatt... what's running through your mind right now?"

"Tubbo," Schlatt admitted, "*Prime*, Tubbo... and Tommy, that poor kid..."

"Tommy?" Puffy asked, "Schlatt, who's Tommy?"

Schlatt laughed humorlessly. "Guess."

Puffy's face was one of pure horror. "You *didn't*—"

"Of course, I did," Schlatt said, "What would you have done, if your son brings home his first friend in years? And prime, he's so traumatized, Puffy; Dream screwed him *up*. I was going to send him to you at some point down the line."

To Schlatt's relief, Puffy nodded. "Okay," she said, "Has anyone seen his wings?"

"Only me and Tubbo."

"Then if you two leave, nobody can point fingers at you," Puffy said, resting a hand on his shoulder, "I'd ask you if you were sure about this, but you really don't have much of a choice."

Schlatt laughed with mild hysteria. He had left the capital to keep Tubbo safe. Now he was returning for the exact same reason.

“People have probably forgotten about me by now,” Schlatt said, “And Tubbo’s much harder to kidnap. We won’t draw attention to ourselves. It should be fine.”

“Okay,” Puffy said, “Do you need help packing?”

“That would be great.”

Tommy watched as Tubbo stopped over a weed, frowning at it fiercely.

“These weeds keep coming back up,” he moaned, “They won’t leave my beautiful garden in peace.”

Tommy sniggered a little bit. “I thought you liked plants.”

Tubbo crossed his arms, his wings bristling. “I like plants,” he said, “I do not like weeds. They try to ruin my other plants.”

“Well, what’s the difference?” Tommy asked, peering at the weeds, “They’re all plants, aren’t they?”

“The difference, my dear Tommy,” Tubbo said, making his voice sound fancy, “Is that *weeds* were not invited to this garden. I invited the flowers and vegetables. I did not invite these *weeds*.”

For some strange reason, Tommy was finding himself fascinated by this aspect of gardening. He poked at the weed’s green stalk.

“So... what do you do then?”

“Well, you pull them out,” Tubbo said simply, “But sometimes they grow back anyway because the root didn’t get pulled all the way out.”

Tommy watched in fascination as Tubbo pulled the weed out, showing Tommy the little roots that came with it.

“Also, pulling weeds can be a bit of a pain,” Tubbo admitted.

“I can, uh.” Tommy swallowed nervously, fiddling with the edge of his cloak. “I can help, if you’d like.”

Tubbo brightened almost instantly, and Tommy knew he had said the right thing.

“That would be awesome,” he said, jumping to his feet, “Let me go grab a bucket for us to put the weeds in.”

Tommy nodded, opting to sit and silently wait for Tubbo to return. While he was sure he probably *could* pull the weeds on his own, he'd prefer not to risk choosing the wrong plant or anything like that.

Tubbo returned soon enough, holding the bucket. "Come on," he said eagerly, "I'll show you which ones we can dig up, and then maybe we can be done before lunch!"

After seeing how many small little plants Tubbo wanted him to help pull up, Tommy thought that 'before lunch' might be a bit of an optimistic estimate.

Still, Tommy was nothing if not determined, and he poured himself into his work, pulling out as many weeds as he laid eyes on. And, funnily enough, they *were* done before lunch.

So now they were lying on the ground, surrounded by colorful flowers and buzzing bees, staring up at the moving clouds.

"That one looks a little like a rabbit," Tubbo said excitedly, pointing up to the sky.

Tommy peered up at that cloud. In all honesty, he only had the vaguest idea of what a rabbit even was, but he trusted that Tubbo knew what he was talking about.

"That one looks like a sword." Tommy pointed to the sword shaped cloud above them.

"Oh, I can see that," Tubbo remarked, "I would've called it a walking cane though."

If Tommy had to guess, he'd say that a walking cane was a cane for walking.

"You're a good friend, Tommy," Tubbo admitted suddenly, his voice quiet, "I just wanted you to know that."

Tommy's insides felt warm, and he grinned nervously. "Where'd that come from?"

Tubbo shrugged. "Well, you're leaving today, and while I obviously don't want you to; I didn't want you to leave without me telling you that."

Tommy's heart plummeted.

He had forgotten that he had planned on leaving. After the preening and the lessons and the eggs, it had completely left his mind.

Did Tommy even want to leave?

Tommy shook himself immediately. It didn't matter if he *wanted* it. His father was coming; Tommy couldn't let Tubbo get hurt.

Besides, Tommy was a murderer. Tommy wasn't quite sure Tubbo had properly understood that yet, properly understood how damn dangerous Tommy could be.

But he didn't want to leave. Tommy liked it here, where Schlatt was kind and the food was good and Tommy could play in the garden. And he had only been here for an evening and the



morning.

This was bad. Tommy was getting attached. Tommy couldn't afford to get attached, not with his father searching for him like this. He needed to *leave*.

And Tommy had a feeling that if he didn't leave right this very second, he might never bring himself to go at all.

He didn't want to do this.

"Actually..." Tommy said slowly, sitting up, "I should probably get going now."

Tubbo looked crestfallen as he sat up as well, and Tommy curled in himself. "I don't...it's not... I *do* like you," he tried to explain, "I just... I'm not safe."

"I don't care about your wings," Tubbo said fiercely, "You haven't hurt anyone."

Tommy laughed bitterly, but it felt more like a sob. "Yeah, uh, that's not true."

"Fine," Tubbo conceded, "But you haven't hurt *me* or my dad once."

"*Tubbo*," Tommy pleaded, "Please. I don't want to cause you to be hurt."

Tubbo sagged, sighing. "Fine," he said, "But you'd better visit."

Tommy smiled, pulling himself to his feet. "I will."

And then he *ran*.

## Chapter End Notes

Hello, I am back with a new chapter.

Wilbur will hopefully return in the next chapter, so that will be fun.

I hope you enjoyed, thank you for reading, and please be nice in the comments! <3

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Summary

“But... it’s my fault,” Wilbur whispered, confessing one of the darkest sins to a complete stranger, “I think I tipped him off. I think he wouldn’t have done anything if he hadn’t realized.”

Dadshclatt on the case.

Wilbur and Tommy are both sad.

Tommy is more traumatized tho.

## Chapter Notes

Tw: ptsd, implied child abuse, referenced kidnapping, referenced murder, guilt, self-hatred, fantastical racism

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

About an hour later, Schlatt went outside, packed and ready to go, to see only Tubbo sitting in the garden.

Panic clawed up Schlatt’s chest like a thousand talons. Had Dream already come? Did he take Tommy? Did he hurt Tubbo?

Schlatt rushed up to his son, gently grabbing him by the shoulders, and spinning him around, praying that nothing was bleeding, praying that nothing was marring Tubbo’s face.

Tubbo looked up at Schlatt in surprise, completely unharmed, tears streaming down his face.

Overwhelming relief and overwhelming dread filled Schlatt simultaneously, and he forced himself to stay calm. The last thing Tubbo needed for him was to panic. He needed to stay calm.

“Tubs?” Schlatt asked softly, “Tubs, what’s wrong?”

*Where was Tommy? Had Dream taken him?*

Tubbo sniffed, wiping his eyes. “Tommy left,” he said, trying to muster up a watery smile, “He said-he said he didn’t want to cause any of us to be hurt.”

Oh, *Tommy*.

The kid may have thought running away was the best move, but in reality, if Dream found them, if Dream realized that Tommy had gotten away...

This time Schlatt's panic all but ripped Schlatt's chest open, and he let go of Tubbo's shoulders to take his hands instead.

"Tubbo," Schlatt said, his voice hard and urgent, "Tubbo, I need you to listen to me."

Tubbo nodded, his eyes wide.

"Someone very dangerous is going after Tommy," Schlatt explained, "So I need to go after him. You need to go with Puffy; she's going to take you to the capital, where it's safer."

"Who's going after Tommy?" Tubbo asked, his voice trembling, "Should I have stopped him from going, I could've—"

Schlatt gently shushed him, squeezing Tubbo's hands in a way that was hopefully reassuring. "No, no, no, this isn't your fault, okay? But I need you to go with Puffy now."

Tubbo nodded, his wings moving agitatedly. "You'll come too, right?"

Schlatt gave Tubbo a strained smile. "As soon as I find Tommy," he promised, "I'll come. I promise."

Schlatt let go of Tubbo and stood up, and Tubbo was quick to jump to his feet after him.

"Pinkie promise?" Tubbo asked, sounding exactly like the scared eleven-year-old that he was. He stuck out a pinkie.

Schlatt stuck out his own pinkie, and they 'shook' on it.

"Alright, I need you to tell me where Tommy went." The urgency in Schlatt's voice was getting more and more tense, and his wings bristled, ready to get off the ground and into the air.

Tubbo pointed toward the forest. "He went that way," he said, his voice still wet from the crying earlier.

Schlatt nodded and gave Tubbo a bone-crushing hug, allowing his wings to drape protectively around him.

"I love you," Schlatt whispered, running his fingers through Tubbo's hair.

"I love you too, Dad," Tubbo replied, hugging Schlatt almost as tightly as Schlatt was hugging him.

They stayed like that for maybe a full minute, Schlatt not wanting to let go, not wanting to let his son out of his sight, not wanting this to be potentially the last time he'd ever see Tubbo.

But Tommy needed him, so Schlatt forced himself to let go of his son.

“Stay safe.” He ruffled Tubbo’s hair.

Tubbo swallowed, staring at Schlatt with such solemnness that Schlatt wondered if he actually knew what Schlatt was risking by trying to track Tommy down. If Schlatt ran into Dream along the way... well, it wouldn’t be the first promise Schlatt has ever broken.

“You too,” Tubbo replied, “Puffy will be mad if you get hurt. And you pinkie promised.”

Schlatt nodded. “Right,” he said quietly, trying to muster up a smile, “I love you Tubs.”

And with that final farewell, Schlatt launched himself into the air, flying in the direction Tubbo pointed him to.

Wilbur Soot was an ordinary traveler with totally ordinary goals of exploring the world. He most certainly was not a prince of an empire on a mission to kill the bastard who kidnapped or prime forbid *killed* his little brother.

Or, at least, that’s what Wilbur hoped anyone who happened to come across him on his journey would believe. It was much harder to get the jump on someone if towns were spreading rumors about your arrival three days in advance.

And news traveled *fast*, especially considering that some gossips had wings that could make them fly faster than they could run their mouths off.

Wilbur despised gossips.

Anyway, Wilbur thought he had made good progress, considering that he had only left this morning. For a full day’s journey, Wilbur had all but made it to his destination by the time the sun was beginning to hide behind the horizon.

And as much as Wilbur would love to try to find Dream, especially when he knew he was *this close* to his destination, Wilbur also knew that it would be the height of folly to do so. Confronting Dream head on was foolish enough, as much as Wilbur hated to admit it, and confronting Dream in the middle of the night was suicide.

So, Wilbur did the reasonable thing. He gathered some wood he found lying around and put it in a pile that did not at all resemble the proper way to build a fire. Glancing around, Wilbur pulled one of his feathers out of his pocket, crushed it in his hand, and aimed a tiny explosion at the pile of wood.

A fresh wave of heat and light filled the small clearing Wilbur had chosen as his camping spot, and Wilbur watched the glow as the wood began crackling alive.

The fire lasted all of ten minutes before suffocating and dying out.

Wilbur sighed. It was a good thing they were currently in the prime of summer, or he would surely freeze to death.

Now, ideally, Wilbur would get another fire started, but he was always horrid at this sort of thing. Techno was probably rolling his eyes from wherever he currently was.

“Well, so much for that,” Wilbur muttered, dully poking at the ashen remains of his fire with the sheath of his sword.

“I can help.”

At the sudden noise, Wilbur leapt to his feet, pulled out his sword, and aimed the blade directly at the newcomer, who was actually sort of short.

The new person stiffened, not moving a muscle.

“Who are you and state your business,” Wilbur said, making sure his voice was as hard as a rock. Sure, he was probably destroying his little ‘innocent traveler’ façade even as he spoke, but that was better than getting a knife to the back.

“I’m Tommy!” the intruder said, his voice high-pitched and terrified, “I just wanted to know if you um... wanted help with your fire? I’m sorry.”

*Oh.* Wilbur was such an idiot. The baby face? The short height? This was a *child*. He couldn’t hurt Wilbur if he tried.

Wilbur instantly sheathed his sword, cursing his paranoia.

“Sorry,” Tommy whispered, taking a step back, “I can-I can go...”

“*Wait!*” Wilbur said, slightly louder than he intended. Wilbur grimaced when he saw Tommy flinch. He sighed. “Sorry, but it’s dangerous out there. Hasn’t anyone told you not to wander around in the dark?”

Tommy’s shoulders hunched in such a way that Wilbur half expected to see his wings bristle or curl around him.

Instead, Wilbur realized that he couldn’t see Tommy’s wings at all.

“Where are your wings?” Wilbur asked rather rudely, cursing himself as soon as the words slipped out. Like that would make Tommy want to stay.

Sure enough, Tommy took another step back. “Why do you want to know?” he asked, sounding agitated, which was fair. Wilbur did basically demand to see his wings, which was generally known as *bad manners*.

Wilbur’s old governess would be rolling around in her grave right now. Good. Wilbur never liked her anyway.

“Sorry,” Wilbur still said hurriedly, “That was rude of me; I’m just a tad on edge, but that doesn’t excuse my rudeness. I don’t need to see your wings, which are under your...cloak, right? Sorry, it’s hard to see down here, and now I’m rambling *prime*—”

“Okay, okay, I get it,” Tommy said, his voice getting more irritated than scared. Wilbur counted that as a win. “If you don’t want my help, that’s fine, I’ll leave now. Sorry for wasting your time.”

“Didn’t I just tell you it was dangerous?” Wilbur asked, rolling his eyes.

“I can handle myself,” Tommy snapped, “I’m not... I’m not *weak*. ”

“You’re tiny,” Wilbur said in deadpan, “I could probably take you out in an instant.”

Tommy stared at Wilbur for a moment. “Your wings aren’t black.” He crossed his arms. “You can’t take me out in an instant.”

Wilbur’s chest squeezed at the mention of black wings, trying not to remember the way Thomas’ used to flap adorably whenever he’d laugh hard enough. Thomas. Tommy. Wilbur hated how painfully similar the names were.

“Black-borns aren’t bad,” Wilbur snapped, suddenly aggravated.

Thomas—no, *Tommy*—flinched, but that didn’t stop him from saying, “They kill people.”

“Just because they *can*, doesn’t mean they do,” Wilbur corrected, his voice more tired than irritated this time. How many times had he had this argument with other men? At least Tommy had the excuse of being young.

“But they do,” Tommy said stubbornly, his voice cracking for some odd reason, “They’re killers; they destroy everything; they’re dangerous.”

Wilbur ran his hands through his hair. “Spouting out propaganda there, kid?”

“What’s...” Tommy began before shutting his mouth firmly.

Yeah, Wilbur wasn’t going to sleep peacefully if Tommy was going to just leave a question hanging like that.

“What’s what?” Wilbur asked impatiently.

“It’s nothing,” Tommy said, looking away, “Sorry.”

Wilbur forced himself to release some of the tension in his shoulders. Kids weren’t typically alone in the woods in the middle of the night without any reason. Maybe Wilbur should be treating this situation with a little more politeness.

“No, I’m sorry,” Wilbur sighed, “But could you please tell me what your question is? It won’t make me mad or whatever you’re worried about.”

Wilbur was so bad at this.

Tommy let out a breath. “I just... what’s propaganda?”

Oh. Wilbur forgot he was speaking to a child.

“It’s things the government will tell you so that you believe what they want you to believe,” Wilbur explained, “In this instance, our ancestors were scared of black-borns, so past leaders turned the people against them using fear.”

“It’s not a lie, though,” Tommy protested, “The government didn’t tell me anything. I *know* black-borns kill people.”

“How?” Wilbur demanded, crossing his arms, “Have you ever even *met* one? Or are you just repeating what your parents have taught you?”

“I’ve met one,” Tommy replied, his voice sounding taught, “And my father is never wrong, so—”

“Are you so sure about that?” Wilbur interrupted, not processing the first part of Tommy’s reply, “Nobody is *never* wrong. Surely your father was wrong about *something* at one point.”

“Didn’t you hear me?” Tommy demanded, “I’ve met one. He’s killed *hundreds* of innocent people. *Hundreds.*”

Oh. Oh crap.

Wilbur panicked as Tommy began sobbing where he stood. What did he do? Should he let him be? Should he try to comfort him? What was he supposed to say? *Oh, I’m sorry that you suffered something horribly traumatic, but you still need to not be racist.* Somehow, Wilbur doubted that would blow over well, even if Tommy probably needed to hear it.

Unsure of what to do, Wilbur hesitantly stepped forward, tentatively reaching to put a hand on Tommy’s shoulder. Tommy flinched away, but he didn’t take another step back, so Wilbur counted that as a small victory.

“Hey, Tommy, can you hear me?” Wilbur asked, trying to make his voice as gentle as possible.

Tommy nodded, frantically trying to wipe the tears from his eyes. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” he sobbed, “I know it’s for the best, I know... but he had a *son*, and I...”

*Prime.* Wilbur knelt down slightly so that he was no longer towering over the small child, his wings itched to drape around Tommy like a protective curtain, but Wilbur resisted. That was too strange, too soon. Wilbur barely knew this child.

“You’re safe,” Wilbur said quietly, “Nobody here can hurt you.”

“I’m sorry,” Tommy continued to sob, “I’m sorry for being weak, I—”

“No, no,” Wilbur soothed, trying his best to channel his inner Phil, “no, you’re not weak. My brother, who’s probably the strongest man I know, cried three months ago.”

Tommy continued to frantically attempt to stem the flow of his tears.

Wilbur decided he’d just keep on talking.

“It was out little brother’s birthday,” he continued, swallowing down the lump in his throat, “We... we... he’s dead.”

Because as much as Wilbur hated to admit it, his quest was far more likely to be a revenge quest than a rescue mission. It had been too many years. The chances of Thomas being alive were slim.

But maybe that wasn’t an appropriate thing to tell an already crying child.

Wilbur cleared his throat awkwardly. “Maybe we should sit down?”

Tommy sat down almost instantly; it was mildly uncanny. Wilbur sat down next to him.

Whenever Wilbur was this sad, he had always wanted a hug. Hugs were helpful, right? But Tommy was more skittish than anyone Wilbur had ever seen.

“Can I—can I hug you?” Wilbur asked tentatively.

Tommy shook his head, hugging his cloak closer to himself. Wilbur wasn’t entirely sure *why* Tommy wanted to hide his wings that badly. Surely keeping them cramped in the cloak wasn’t comfortable?

Oh well. It wasn’t Wilbur’s place to comment on it.

Tommy pulled himself together pretty quickly after they sat down, sniffing pitifully.

“I’m sorry,” he muttered, “Shouldn’t have done that.”

“It was fine,” Wilbur muttered back, feeling suddenly very tired, “You said you could help with that fire?”

Tommy jumped to his feet. “Um... yeah, let me just...”

Tommy put a fire together in about five minutes. Techno would’ve been proud as Tommy fanned the flames higher and higher, making them sound like a windy day contained in a mess of energy and making Wilbur feel toasty warm.

“There,” Tommy muttered, sitting about ten feet away from Wilbur.

“Thanks,” Wilbur breathed out, “Do you want your pay now? I mean, I’m assume that’s why you wanted to help.”

Tommy shrugged. “I wasn’t going to mention it after that whole crying thing.”



Wilbur reached into his pocket and tossed a shiny gold coin toward him. Tommy caught it, staring up at Wilbur in shock.

“Don’t mention it,” Wilbur muttered, “I’ve got plenty.”

“*Gold.*” Tommy stared at the coin like some sort of magpie. “This could feed me for *weeks*. This is...” Tommy glanced at Wilbur, and it was nice to actually be able to properly see the kid’s facial expressions now that a fire was lighting up the area. “I don’t deserve this.”

“Call it a gift.”

For a few moments, the only sound was the crackling of the fire. When Wilbur realized that Tommy wasn’t actually going to start any conversation himself, he decided he would fill the silence again.

“You remind me of my brother, you know.”

Wilbur wanted to smack himself. Why had he chosen to start a conversation like that?

Tommy grunted. “I’m nothing like your brother.”

Wilbur hesitated, unsure if he wanted to pursue this conversation any further. Did Wilbur even want to talk about Thomas?

“*My little brother is black-born.*”

Yeah, yeah, he did. It was quite frankly Wilbur’s fatal flaw, if he ever had one.

“Well, you never know,” Wilbur said quietly, “It’s not like he lived very long.”

“How can I remind you of someone that you barely knew?” Tommy asked, his voice cracking again.

Wilbur shrugged. “I don’t know,” he admitted, “But he had fluffy blond hair like you, and his eyes were bluer than the sky, and his wings...”

Tommy tensed. “What about his wings?”

Wilbur sighed, running his hand through his hair. “He was black-born, you know.” Tommy made a stricken expression, and Wilbur shook his head quickly. “He wasn’t... he wasn’t *dangerous*. He was just a baby.”

“Still dangerous,” Tommy muttered.

“No,” Wilbur corrected gently, “Magic doesn’t come in until you’re three, remember? And even if he did have the power, it’s not like you can’t control it.”

Tommy was staring at Wilbur, an expression akin to shock on his face.

“What?”

“Magic doesn’t come in until you’re *three*?” Tommy demanded.

Wilbur frowned. Why was Tommy sounding so shocked? This was very common knowledge. “Yes?”

“So... your brother... he never accidentally killed anyone?” Tommy asked, “Never?”

*Prime*, who had raised this child?

“Of course not,” Wilbur said, “He was harmless. My father made sure everyone who knew about him knew that. And I...”

Wilbur let out a bitter laugh.

“Tech—my twin, I mean—he blames himself.” Wilbur glanced up at the starry night sky. “He was there, when my brother was... taken, and... I mean, it’s not like there was much he could’ve done. How old was he? Nine? Eight?”

Tommy shrugged.

Wilbur let out a shuddering breath.

“But... it’s my fault,” Wilbur whispered, confessing one of the darkest sins to a complete stranger, “I think I tipped him off. I think he wouldn’t have done anything if he hadn’t realized.”

Wilbur had been such an idiot. At eight years old, almost nine, he had been adamant that everyone pull their heads out of the ground and learn that black-borns weren’t just *evil*.

So, he went to town. He told everyone about his brother. Only one or two actually bothered to listen.

But Wilbur would never, *never*, forget that flash of neon green he had seen out of the corner of his eyes as he headed home. He would *never* forget how he had brushed it off, dismissing it as nothing.

There were neon green remains of a feather left on Tommy’s bedroom floor. Techno had detachedly described neon green wings before refusing to speak to anyone in the family for weeks.

It was Wilbur’s fault Thomas had been taken. It was Wilbur’s fault that Thomas was probably dead.

Maybe that was why Wilbur didn’t care if he was potentially walking straight to his death. He’d deserve it, for what he did.

“It wasn’t your fault,” Tommy said suddenly, his voice still wavering, “You didn’t *do* anything; it’s not like you demanded that this person take your brother. It was an accident. Accidents happen all the time, and it’s not... it’s not... you can’t—”

And all of a sudden, Tommy burst into tears again.

For some reason, this caused Wilbur to cry as well.

*Damnit.*

## Chapter End Notes

Back at it again with *angst*.

Why hasn't Schlatt found Tommy yet? I call it sneaky boy, fast boy, hard to spot boy, and scared boy.

Anyway, hope you enjoyed, please be nice in the comments, and thank you for reading!  
<3

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Summary

Scary Dream and Puffy backstory

## Chapter Notes

Tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced character death, stabbing that amounts to nothing, manipulation, hostage situations, life debts

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After his dad left, disappearing as he flew farther and farther away, Tubbo turned around and ran back into the house.

Puffy was waiting for him, holding two knapsacks that seemed to be filled with the brim. Her wings were flared out like she was ready to take flight instantly, and honestly, Tubbo didn't quite blame her. Based off the panic in his dad's voice, things were a lot more complicated and urgent than Tubbo had previously understood.

Guilt tugged at Tubbo's chest. He shouldn't have let Tommy leave. He should've made him stay. Because now Daddy was leaving to find him and was being put in even more danger than before.

"Where's your dad?" Puffy asked, her voice calm and collected, but Tubbo could see that she was as tense as the rest of them; her wings were a bit of a give away.

Just seeing how tense Puffy was made Tubbo's wings puff up in turn, and it took everything he had not to start idly picking his feathers out to relieve the stress.

"Tommy left," Tubbo admitted quietly, looking down at his feet, "Daddy's searching for him."

Puffy swore under her breath, probably with the intention of Tubbo not hearing.

"He said we should leave without him," Tubbo informed her, hoping that might assuage her worries. It was unlikely, but a kid could hope, right?

Puffy ran her fingers through her puffy hair, but she nodded. "Alright, yeah, he's right," she muttered, "Okay, let's go."

Puffy held her hand out toward Tubbo, and Tubbo grabbed it. Puffy squeezed it comfortingly as they half-walked/half-jogged toward the front hall.

They were interrupted by the sound of a door *slamming* open loudly, causing Tubbo to jump at let out a short high-pitched sound.

Puffy immediately clapped her hand over his mouth.

“Tubbo,” Puffy whispered, her voice so quiet that Tubbo had to strain his ears to hear the words, “Tubbo, I need you to sit in that closet—” She pointed to the open closet that was usually used for cloaks and blankets. “—and I need you to not make a sound, okay love?”

Tubbo nodded, his heart already hammering against his chest. What was happening? Was there someone breaking in? Why?

Puffy let go of Tubbo, gesturing that he hurry. Tubbo complied, all but sprinting into the closet. He curled up in the corner of the small, dark space, making so that he was hiding behind the cloaks hanging there. Tubbo was still not entirely sure *who* he was hiding from, but clearly, they were frightening if Puffy was this scared. Puffy was almost never scared of anything.

Puffy slowly closed the closet door, making it so that the latch barely made a clicking sound.

And then Tubbo was alone, trying to make his breathing as silent as possible, which of course, only made it feel louder. His heart was beating so fast that it made his chest hurt, and Tubbo could *hear* each frantic thump that he was surprised that nobody started barging in there right at that minute.

It was so dark, and Puffy was so scared, and Daddy had been so scared, and *Tommy* had been so scared.

Tubbo was terrified.

He felt like some invisible force literally tugged at his heart when he heard another door slam open hardly moments after Puffy had shut the closet door.

“What do you want?” Puffy’s voice asked, sounding a lot firmer than Tubbo usually heard it.

“I recognize you,” a new voice said, “Where do I know you from?”

Puffy let out a snarling noise, and Tubbo sucked in a breath. “I’m not playing your little game. What do you want?”

“I would watch your tone,” the voice purred, causing Tubbo to shiver deeper and shuffle deeper into the closet.

“And I would watch yours,” Puffy said, unyielding, “What do you want, Dream?”

Tubbo stopped breathing.

*Dream.*

The older kids used to tell horror stories about Dream, about how he would creep up on you when you were sleeping, about how he kidnapped children from beds, about how he would kill anyone who betrayed him.

“Oh, so I do know you,” Dream said, sounding strangely triumphant, “Not many are actually stupid enough to address me by name.”

“Not many are stupid enough to speak to you to begin with,” Puffy said, her voice suddenly cold, “And enough with the false ignorance, you know exactly who I am.”

“Maybe, maybe not,” Dream sounded aloof, casual, like he wasn’t the most feared man Tubbo had ever heard of, “I mean, it’s not every day that you meet someone with *white* wings! You’d think I’d remember someone with such beauties.”

“You and I know full well that I gave up the power,” Puffy said, “I’ll ask you this one more time, Dream. What do you want?”

Dream laughed, and it was so chilling that Tubbo let out a small whimper. He immediately clapped his hand over his mouth. He couldn’t be heard, he needed to stay *quiet*.

“Puffy, Puffy, Puffy,” Dream laughed, “You know who I’m looking for.”

“I know you’re looking for a child,” Puffy said coldly, “But for the life of me, I cannot figure out *why* you’re so obsessed with him.”

“That’s for me to know and you to hold your tongue about,” Dream said sternly, as if he were disciplining a child.

“Nice try, *sir*,” Puffy said mockingly, “But I don’t follow orders from you anymore.”

*What?*

“I will not hesitate to cut you down where you stand.”

“And I will not hesitate to lose my life if it means you don’t get what you want, whatever that may be.”

“You know what I want.”

“A child, yeah, real specific.”

“A child that has been here recently,” Dream elaborated.

Tubbo heard footsteps walk nearby, and he held his breath, praying that Dream wouldn’t open the door.

“They’ve already left,” Puffy replied, her voice so steady that Tubbo wouldn’t even had suspected that there was another child hiding the house if he weren’t said child, “You’ve just

missed them.”

The footsteps stopped.

“I figured,” Dream said, sounding strangely relaxed for the most frightening man in the kingdom, “It doesn’t matter, though. I’ll find him soon enough.”

“No, you won’t,” Puffy snarled.

Dream laughed again, and Tubbo squeezed his eyes shut. He wished he could see what was going on in there.

“You think *that* will help you?” Dream asked sounding slightly crazed.

“I think it might.”

“Thomas already tried that. It didn’t exactly work out for him.”

“It must’ve if he managed to escape *you*. ”

Dream let out another cold laugh. “You’ve heard from Sam recently?”

Tubbo could practically hear the room freeze over, and he found that he could hear every minuscule sound he was making far better than before. Tubbo gave up on controlling his loud breathing and simply held his breath, hoping that the conversation would start back up soon.

“Sam’s dead,” Puffy said her voice dripping in venom, “You killed him.”

“Well... yes and no,” Dream said, “Sam is dead, and I did indeed kill him, but not twenty years ago.”

“What are you talking about?” Puffy demanded.

“You see, I arrived moments too late after you made the transfer,” Dream explained, “And, of course, you had undermined me. You know how I hate being undermined.”

“Your point?” Puffy’s voice was cold again.

“Poor little Sam fought bravely, I’ll give him that. Of course, even he knew that it was a losing battle from the start. So, when I had the tip of my sword on his neck, he bargained.”

“What?” Puffy’s voice wasn’t angry anymore, it was almost faint.

“A story for another time, I think,” Dream said pleasantly, “Let’s just say that Sam didn’t follow through on his bargain, and now he’s dead. As a matter of fact, now I have every right to kill *you*. ”

“You can try.”

There was a small pause, and Dream let out a laugh.

“So, Philza felt generous,” he said, actually sounding irritated, “How *kind* of him.”

“Did you seriously think he was just going to let me walk away to be killed?” Puffy asked, sounding slightly smug.

“You’re all idiots, I don’t know what to expect on the best of days.” Tubbo tensed when he heard the door-handle rattle. “I mean, a closet, really? I thought you were smarter than that, *Captain*.”

The closet door swung open, and Tubbo froze suddenly, staying stiller than a statue. *He couldn’t let Dream see him, he couldn’t let Dream see him, he couldn’t let Dream see him, he couldn’t let—*

The cloaks hiding Tubbo were suddenly shoved out of the way, and Tubbo squeezed his eyes shut, as though that would make him invisible.

A hand grabbed him by the chin, and Tubbo gasped, snapping his eyes open.

A poorly-drawn smiley face was barely inches away from Tubbo’s face.

Tubbo *screamed*.

“Not the child I was looking for,” Dream muttered, his voice so much more terrifying this close.

“Stay away from him,” Puffy snarled.

From behind Dream, Tubbo could see Puffy running up to him, reaching out her hand—

Dream grabbed Puffy’s wrist before her fingers could connect with Dream’s skin. Puffy let out a gasp of pain as he twisted her wrist back, causing her to drop black feather-ashes.

“Careful, Captain,” Dream said, his voice sounding like water right before it boiled over, “I’d hate to see your hand *slip*.”

Dream brought Puffy’s hand close to Tubbo’s face, and he tried to shrink back, even though his head was already firmly against the wall.

“No,” Puffy gasped, “Please, no.”

Dream tutted. “And here I thought you gave him one of Philza’s feathers. I *am* disappointed in you. I thought I trained you better than that.”

Dream whipped a knife out of his cloak and stabbed Puffy’s stomach. Puffy let out a startled gasp. Tubbo screamed.

*Puffy, no, Puffy couldn’t die, Puffy couldn’t die, what was happening, was she dying, there’s a knife in her stomach, of course she was dying, prime Puffy was dying, no—*



Dream forced Puffy's hand to touch one of the wooden panels of the floor, and Tubbo watched as the panel dissolved into a million pieces. Dream then yanked the knife out of Puffy's stomach, and to Tubbo's immense shock, the wound in Puffy's stomach closed over before it could even begin bleeding.

"Now, here's what's going to happen," Dream said, pulling a black feather out of a pouch on his belt, "I am going to leave with this child, and you are going to stay put."

Puffy glared and opened her mouth, but Dream held closed his fist around the feather, looking ready to crush it. Puffy closed her mouth and nodded.

"I'm being merciful, you know," Dream said, roughly yanking Tubbo to his feet, "I could have killed you both."

"This isn't mercy," Puffy snarled, standing up to look Dream full on at his masked face, "Keep Tubbo out of this."

"That ended as soon as he openly made friends with a blond-haired boy that introduced himself as Tommy," Dream said, grasping onto Tubbo's shoulder so firmly that it hurt.

Tubbo could barely move. He could barely think. Why did Dream want Tommy? When did Puffy work for *Dream*? Who was Sam?

He wanted his dad, but he was simultaneously grateful that he was nowhere near here. At least he wouldn't have to worry about Tubbo while *Dream* was holding him hostage.

"I swear, if you hurt him—"

"That depends on Thomas' cooperation," Dream replied smoothly, "Or the father's, if he happens to run into me."

Tubbo's heart skipped a beat. Dream was looking for his dad? Why was he looking for his dad? His dad hadn't *done* anything.

Puffy's eyes were also blown wide. "How—"

"Schlatt, twenty-seven years old. At sixteen, he started to run a rather successful wine business before leaving only a *year* later because his infant son was kidnapped for ransom."

How... how did he know all that? Hell, *Tubbo* didn't know all that. His dad said that the capital wasn't safe, but he never mentioned Tubbo had been *kidnapped*.

"Don't look so surprised," Dream said, a smiling tilt to his voice, "It was the gossip of the capital ten years ago."

Puffy was spitting like an angry cat as Dream led Tubbo outside, and Tubbo followed obediently. What else was he supposed to do? Dream had him under threat of death.

It still felt so surreal, Tubbo half expected to wake up from this nightmare any minute now, with Tommy still resting against his shoulder.

They stepped outside, and Tubbo let out a startled whimper as Dream wrapped both of his arms around him in a strange embrace.

“You won’t be able to catch up.”

Dream launched himself into the air, taking a shrieking Tubbo up with him.

## Chapter End Notes

Puffy wasn't meant to have a backstory, but then i realized that my already previous existing world building called for it so now we are here.

Anyway, we will get back to Tommy and Wilbur in the next chapter.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments! <3

Edit: dream destroys the floor instead of the knife because i said so

# Chapter 8

## Chapter Summary

Tommy is guilty, Schlatt's upset, Wilbur may or may not be a not idiot

## Chapter Notes

tw: referenced murder, PTSD, guilt, self-loathing, suicidal thoughts, blood, hostage situations, near death

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“I have some blankets for nesting,” Wilbur said, tossing Tommy a few blankets before Tommy could even reply, “Not a ton, I thought I was going to be the only passenger, sorry.”

Tommy nodded, staring down at the blankets in his arms. They were nice, probably more expensive than the one's Schlatt owned, which would make sense, since Wilbur seemed to be giving out gold pieces for free.

Honestly, who did that?

Wilbur cleared his throat as he arranged his nest. “Sorry about earlier, by the way,” he said, “I didn't mean to get so... undignified.”

“Yeah,” Tommy muttered, “Sorry about before too.”

Tommy hadn't meant to cry. He'd only meant to tell Wilbur something Sam had told him whenever he felt particularly guilty about a death, but instead he burst into tears before he could get the words out.

*Pathetic.*

“Anyway,” Wilbur said, clearing his throat, “I reckon we should part ways tomorrow. I am on a rather dangerous mission, and it would not do for ten-year-olds—”

“Eleven,” Tommy interrupted without thinking, “I'm eleven.”

Tommy stared at the blankets in his lap, trying not to fidget with the cloth. He interrupted Wilbur; he needed to stop doing that; it was disrespectful.

Wilbur made a noise that didn't sound angry but certainly sounded distressed. "It would not do for eleven-year-olds to follow me."

Tommy nodded. He glanced up from the blankets to gauge a reaction on Wilbur's face.

Wilbur was staring at the fire, his face glowing slightly in the orange light, but Tommy couldn't make out what expression he was wearing.

Tommy shivered. Whenever Tommy couldn't make out his father's expression, it usually meant something bad. Well... not bad, no not bad. It just meant... he was probably going to teach Tommy a new lesson, like how to pin someone down, or how to go days without eating and still be in fighting condition, or how to rip the feathers off of someone's wings and use their power for their own gain...

But that was okay. Thomas was loyal. Thomas was a good son. Thomas needed to know those things it was necessary—

"Tommy?" A voice cut into Thomas's thoughts, and he blinked. "Tommy, are you alright? What's wrong?"

Oh, it was Wilbur.

Thomas—*Tommy* took a deep breath, but it sounded more like a gasping wheeze. More tears spilled from his eyes, and Tommy tried to stem them back. Honestly, why did he have to be so *weak*?

A hand was on Tommy's shoulder, and Tommy flinched back, nearly raising his wings protectively before stopping himself. The hand left.

"Tommy?" Wilbur whispered, "Can you hear me?"

Tommy gave Wilbur a short nod, covering his face with his hands. Wilbur didn't need to see him like this. Tommy was supposed to be strong; he was supposed to be useful; he was supposed to be able to carry his own weight.

He wasn't supposed to be weakly crying like a child, like a coward.

Tommy felt warm arms wrap around him, and Tommy sunk into the embrace, only crying all the harder.

Wilbur hushed him gently. "That's alright," he said softly, "Let it all out."

No, Tommy didn't deserve this kind of comfort. Tommy was a killer; he was dangerous. Why-why was everyone treating him so kindly? Why were they treating a murderer this way?

Tommy shook his head. "You don't understand," he gasped, "I'm a monster. Please, I-I..."

A sob choked him off mid-sentence, and Wilbur started massaging Tommy's back comfortingly. "You couldn't have saved them all," Wilbur said, probably thinking he was being comforting.

Tommy shook his head frantically. “No, you don’t understand, I-it was me-it...”

It was *him*. Tommy killed all of those people. Tommy had looked them in the eyes and watched as the light left their eyes, as they slumped to the ground, as they made no expression, because they were *dead, dead, dead*.

And Tommy was tired of it. Tommy didn’t want to speak to someone who thought so well of black-borns like him, who thought that he was not a killer, who thought that he was innocent.

Tommy could hardly stand to be alive in this stupid world at all, not if it meant so many people had to die.

“Sometimes,” Tommy whispered, “I wish I could kill myself.”

Wilbur’s embrace stiffened, and Tommy stiffened in turn.

“What do you mean?” Wilbur asked, his voice shaking, “What-what do you mean by that?”

Tommy buried his face into Wilbur’s chest, not caring that Wilbur was probably about to become his killer.

“One of them was pregnant, you know,” Tommy whispered “My father was curious to see if the baby would live if-if...”

Tommy couldn’t finish, the thought was too horrifying to even think about.

The baby had lived, but it was too small to live in this world for long. Tommy had been told to free it of its misery.

Thomas was obedient. Thomas had obeyed.

Tommy felt sick.

“Your father?” Wilbur asked, “What—your *father* killed them?”

Tommy whimpered, shaking his head quickly. He didn’t want Wilbur to think his father was bad, because he wasn’t...no, his father was bad. His father was terrible. His father enjoyed watching those people *die*... but Tommy was the one who killed them, so surely...

It was a baby. It hadn’t even gotten to see the sun.

“Me,” Tommy managed to gasp, “Kill me.”

“No,” Wilbur said quietly, “Why would I do that?”

“Because I killed them!” Tommy screamed. He felt Wilbur freeze again, inhaling sharply. “I-I... so many people, and he’s looking for me, and he’ll find me, and I don’t want to do it again, and I don’t want anyone to get hurt for me and—”

Wilbur began rocking Tommy back and forth. “He’s not here.” Wilbur gently stroked Tommy’s hair. “He can’t hurt you.”

“He can find me,” Tommy whispered, “I’m probably putting your life in danger right now; I need to leave; I need to—”

“You’re safe,” Wilbur said, “I can protect you. I promise, I can protect you. I *will* protect you, I promise, I promise, I promise.”

Tommy giggled hysterically. “You can’t,” Tommy whispered, “you can’t.”

“I can,” Wilbur promised. He pulled away from the embrace, and Tommy swallowed back a strange a keening sound. “Here, I can give something to you.”

Tommy watched as Wilbur reached into a pouch on his belt and pulled out a single gray feather. Wilbur pressed the feather into Tommy’s hand.

“This is my father’s,” Wilbur said, smiling slightly with tears slipping from his eyes, “It can make the user temporarily unable to die.”

Tommy stared down at the feather and back up at Wilbur, who was still smiling gently.

“It can protect you,” Wilbur promised.

“But who will protect them from me?” Tommy asked, his voice hoarse from all the shouting and crying.

Wilbur frowned, staring at Tommy with a heavy look.

“Did you want to kill them?” Wilbur asked eventually.

Tommy stared back down at the feather in his hand. “I…” He swallowed. “Yeah, I did.”

“Can you tell me why?”

Wilbur still didn’t sound angry, and it frustrated Tommy. Why was Wilbur so calm? Didn’t Wilbur care that Tommy had killed so many people? Didn’t Wilbur care that Tommy had so ruthlessly ripped lives away, and wanted to do it?

“I…” How could Tommy possibly explain? “He… he wanted me to.”

There was more to it than that, there was so much more to it than that. It was more than just his father wanting Tommy to do it; it was what that meant. It was his father’s satisfied smile, the preening that would follow, the hair petting, the compliments, and all the things Tommy would never have if he didn’t kill.

And yet Schlatt and Tubbo… they had given Tommy almost all of those things without death, without murder. They smiled so much, and that preened daily, and they complimented each other, and they nested, and…

It was all a lie. Except his father never lied. But he must've because Tommy got so much comfort without the death, without the unseeing eyes, without feeling the magic thrum through his veins.

Tommy was so confused.

“Okay,” Wilbur whispered, “Okay. I... I don’t think you can be blamed, not, not when you’re so young.”

Wilbur sighed slightly, looking around. “How about we... oh prime, I have no idea what I’m doing. Would eating something help? Maybe it would make you feel a bit better? Or would you just like to nest and get some sleep?”

“I want to die,” Tommy said again, tugging at his hair.

“Yeah, that’s not happening.”

“But *why*?”

Wilbur made a strange noise, and Tommy looked up to see tears actually spilling from Wilbur’s eyes. “Because... because you’re just a kid, damnit.”

“I’ve killed babies,” Tommy reminded Wilbur, wishing he hadn’t brought that memory to the surface, “I’d deserve it.”

“No, no,” Wilbur whispered, “You don’t-you don’t deserve any of this. You... I thought... I knew that—”

“Just spit it out already,” Tommy snapped.

Wilbur looked at the fire. “I just... I never imagined that Dream could be such a horrible person, I suppose.”

Tommy’s lungs iced over.

Wilbur was staring at Tommy in concern again, and Tommy thought he might be saying something. But Tommy couldn’t hear, he couldn’t think, he could hardly breathe.

Wilbur knew his name, Wilbur knew his name, how did Wilbur know his father’s name? Tommy had been so careful; Tommy hadn’t dared let it slip once. So how did Wilbur know?

Wilbur grabbed Tommy by the shoulders, and Tommy flinched back, trying to think clearly. How did Wilbur know his name? *How did he know?*

Prime, Tommy had let it slip, hadn’t he? Tommy had said something; he must’ve. How else could Wilbur possibly know his father’s name?

“Tommy, please,” Wilbur was begging, his voice filtering through Tommy’s ears like there was a stone wall between them, “Talk to me, baby.”

“Can’t—” Tommy gasped. “—name.”

“You need to breathe,” Wilbur instructed, “I won’t say his name again, okay? You need to breathe.”

Tommy tried to inhale, but it felt more like he had taken a knife to his chest.

“Deep breath in,” Wilbur instructed, grabbing Tommy’s hand and resting it on Wilbur’s chest. Tommy could feel a somewhat fast heartbeat, and he took a deep breath, this one a little less stabby. “And out.”

Slowly, they worked through the breathing exercise, and Tommy felt himself calm down a little more as he wiped tears from his eyes.

“Better?” Wilbur whispered.

Tommy nodded, not trusting himself to speak. This was so humiliating. How many times had he started crying front of Wilbur now? Tommy couldn’t quite remember, but he knew it must’ve been a good amount at this rate.

“Can I... can I hug you?” Wilbur’s eyes looked red and puffy, and Tommy wondered if Wilbur had also cried in this one evening more than he had ever done in his entire life.

Tommy nodded hesitantly, too tired to resist the comfort of warmth, even if he knew he didn’t deserve it. Death was cold, cold, cold. It wasn’t warm. Killers didn’t deserve the warm.

But there was something about Wilbur that made Tommy want to snuggle close to him and never leave. To be honest, it reminded Tommy a bit of when he went through that imprinting stage of his life when he was four, unable to stop peeping unless he was snuggling close to a family member or a loved one.

His father had been there sometimes. Sam had been there more.

Tommy didn’t want to think about Sam.

Wilbur slowly held Tommy close, holding him so that Tommy’s head was resting against Wilbur’s chest. Tommy could hear the beating of Wilbur’s heart, and now Tommy was pretty sure it was beating faster than hearts normally did.

Or maybe Tommy was wrong. He didn’t spend his days regularly checking other people’s pulses. That would be weird.

“I was thinking,” Wilbur whispered, resting his chin on top of Tommy’s hair, “Who needs to track anyone down anyway? How about we just... return to the capital? I have-there’s a nice-you could live there. With us.”

Tommy shook his head. “He’d find you,” he whispered, “He’ll capture you if he can’t kill you, and then he’ll ask—”

“He won’t,” Wilbur vowed, “I live in the safest place in the kingdom.”



Tommy shook his head again. “I can’t.”

Wilbur sighed quietly, and Tommy flinched. “Okay,” Wilbur said, “How about we nest and talk about this in the morning? I honestly wouldn’t be surprised if my brother manages to track me down within that time, so that means we can all talk about it together.”

Tommy nodded, even though he’d really rather not leave Wilbur’s embrace. Something about it just felt so *right* in a way that embraces with his father didn’t.

Maybe that was a good thing.

Schlatt’s heart pounded against his chest. He could barely breathe.

Because Tubbo, his beautiful son, had his back pressed up against Dream’s body, and the black feather in Dream’s hand might as well have been a knife.

They were supposed to be safe. Tubbo was supposed to have gotten away. Schlatt was supposed to find Tommy and join Tubbo in the capital.

But instead, hardly two hours after Schlatt began his search, he finds *Dream*, the most dangerous man alive, holding his son *hostage*.

No, no, no. This couldn’t be happening. Tubbo was too young to die. Tubbo was too young to be played in Dream’s chess game. Tubbo was too young for any of this. Schlatt had taken Tubbo to the country to keep him safe, not to get him roped into this *mess*.

“Please,” Schlatt gasped, “Please, let him go. You can take me instead—”

Tubbo’s eyes widened, and he pushed against Dream’s grasp with complete disregard for his own life. “Dad, *no*—”

Dream’s grip on Tubbo was too strong, and Tubbo barely moved a centimeter forward.

“The kid cares about me,” Schlatt continued, “The one you’re looking for. Tubbo has nothing to do with this. It’s all on me. Please, I’ll give you all of my feathers, I’ll even give you all of Tubbo’s feathers—” It was a horrifying thought, but feathers could regrow. Lives could not. “—just let me take his place.”

Dream smiled. “Normally, this would be the part where I make you swear your life to me,” Dream said calmly, as though this were nothing than a casual walk in the park, “And I would let your precious son go.”

Schlatt clenched his fists. If that was what it took, then he would do it. He would do anything to spare Tubbo.

“I—”

“*Normally,*” Dream continued, looking like he was enjoying this far too much for a man who was literally threatening the life of Schlatt’s child, “But there’s no true advantage in that. Sure, I could switch out the hostages for your sake, but honestly, I think our *dear* Tubbo here has a better chance of convincing Thomas to my side.”

“They’re children,” Schlatt snapped, “You can’t—”

Dream tilted his head. “*I* can’t?” His grin was feral. “You see, that’s where you would be wrong. *I* can do anything I want. You, on the other hand...”

Schlatt froze as Dream pulled a blood red feather from his belt. Dream crushed it in his fist, and nothing visibly happened.

Shoot. It was a long range one then. And that *damn mask* meant that Schlatt couldn’t see which one of them Dream was looking at.

*Not Tubbo, please aim at Schlatt, please aim at Schlatt, please aim at Schlatt—*

Dream snapped his fingers, and searing pain bloomed in Schlatt’s stomach. Schlatt yelled out in agony, glancing down for only a moment to see blood already staining his shirt.

Tubbo screamed.

Schlatt nearly collapsed, but he quickly caught himself, instead stumbling forward. Putting pressure on his fresh wounds, he looked back up at Dream, his gaze murderous.

“Get the hell off of my son,” he snarled, hunching over in pain, but not removing his gaze.

Dream tilted his head, now looking down slightly to look at Schlatt’s hunch form in the eyes. “You *are* determined,” he purred, “Maybe I’ll come back for you when this is done.”

Schlatt bared his teeth, reaching for the knife that he had in his pocket. He didn’t think he would need it, but as it turned out—

“What are you going to use the knife for?” Dream taunted, “Are you going to throw it at me? What if you hit your beautiful boy?”

Tubbo was crying while simultaneously trying to spin his heard around to face Dream, glaring fiercely. “Let go, let go of me!”

Dream let out a cold laugh.

“Well, this is farewell, Schlatt,” Dream said, turning around and taking Tubbo with him, “I hope you manage to live to fight another day.”

Schlatt growled, trying to sprint toward Dream and tackle him to the ground, but he collapsed only three steps in. Whatever Dream had done to him, it was causing Schlatt to lose blood and *fast*.

“Get back here you monster!” Schlatt screamed as Dream dragged away a now screaming Tubbo.

Dream ignored him, slowly disappearing from view. Schlatt continued screaming, shouting every insult and curse he could summon to mind.

By the time he was done, he was gasping for breath, and not just because he had spent one-minute screaming at the top of his lungs.

Schlatt was dying.

It was kind of easy to see that when there was a magically inflicted wound in his abdomen, causing you to bleed out painfully and quickly.

“What the hell is going on here?”

Schlatt only let out a moan in reply.

And suddenly two hands were grabbing him by the shoulder, rolling him over on his back. Schlatt’s vision was blurring, but he could make out pink hair of all things.

“Oh crap, that’s incredibly unfortunate, wait a moment, I can handle this, I know how to handle things like this.”

The stranger was pressing a feather into Schlatt’s fist, and Schlatt crushed it before passing out entirely.

## Chapter End Notes

Wilbur is not an idiot. Please wait for his point of view in the next chapter before stating as such.

I would say that things are about to get better, but im honestly not sure that's true.

Oh well, thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments!  
<3

# Chapter 9

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur has thoughts

Tommy does a thing

## Chapter Notes

tw: death?, child abuse, manipulation, hostage situations, some blood, ptsd, conditioning, referenced murder

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur was numb. He was shocked. He was overjoyed. He was heartbroken.

Wilbur was so full of emotions that he didn't even know anymore.

Tommy was asleep in the nest he had made for himself, looking entirely unsure of what he was doing, which in itself was the most heartbreaking thing he had ever seen. Children should never look that unsure about nesting, most children knew how to do it by the time they were *two*. Tommy declared himself that he was eleven.

Thomas was eleven.

Tommy was Thomas.

Wilbur put his head in his hands, gripping onto his hair to ground himself. Tommy was not Thomas, that was a fantasy that Wilbur had created for himself to cope with his baby brother's loss.

And yet...

Tommy said so himself. A black born had killed hundreds of people. Then Tommy switches the narrative to himself, saying that *he* killed those people.

So it stood to reason that Tommy was black born.

But that wasn't proof. Just because Thomas and Tommy had the same hair, and the same eyes, and the same wings, and the same age did not mean they were the same person. It was fantasy, is what it was.

Techno was right; Wilbur's fantasy of Thomas still being alive was making him see things that weren't there.

But when Wilbur brought up Dream, almost as a test, because Dream was certainly someone who would make a child kill for him, Tommy had a panic attack. That meant that Dream was indeed Tommy's "father."

Dream had kidnapped Thomas.

At this point the evidence was mounting, and it was driving Wilbur crazy. He couldn't just see a random black born child on the street and instantly assume it was Thomas. That wasn't how life worked.

But, when he hugged Tommy, his hybrid instincts had felt the same way he felt when he hugged Techno or Phil. They screamed of family, of the *flock*.

There really was no explaining that away.

Thomas was alive, like Wilbur had always hoped. And Wilbur had *found* him. Wilbur had actually *found* Thomas.

And Thomas, or Tommy now, was without a doubt the most traumatized child Wilbur had ever met.

Just thinking about it made Wilbur want to crush a feather in his fist and set the entire forest aflame. How dare—how *dare* Dream do that to his baby brother? How dare Dream raise Tommy like he was his own, training him to be a *killing machine* until Tommy finally snapped and ran for it?

And there was still clearly so much left in the story that Wilbur didn't know *anything* about.

Wilbur would *kill* him.

But only after he made sure Tommy was safely in the capital. He trusted that Technoblade would be here any minute now, so Wilbur could catch him up on the situation then.

Wilbur returned his attention to the sleeping boy in front of him, and he wished he had convinced Tommy to take his cloak off before he had fallen asleep. His wings surely couldn't be comfortable underneath them, and while Wilbur certainly understood Tommy's plight; it hurt to know that he was used to keeping them so cramped together.

With a quiet sigh, Wilbur resisted the urge to crawl into the nest with Tommy. It would probably be strange for a kid to find out he had been sleeping beside a complete stranger, even if Tommy had accepted Wilbur's hug before.

So Wilbur set up his own nest a few feet away from Tommy's, watching the fire flicker out into nothingness.

Wilbur didn't fall asleep, though. It was far too dangerous with Dream still lurking about, likely trying to track Thomas—Tommy down.

So Wilbur stayed awake, keeping his eyes peeled for any sign of bright, neon green wings.

But there was nothing except for the hoots of an owl for the entire night.

After the sun had risen, Tommy woke up and got into a sitting position, making a strange motion that probably implied that he really wanted to stretch his wings but was deciding the better of it.

“If you need to stretch your wings, do so,” Wilbur said gently, as he started making a new fire to cook some breakfast on, “It’s better than you cramping them up.”

Tommy gave Wilbur a strange look, once again clutching his cloak like it was the only thing keeping him alive.

“I don’t want to,” he said.

Wilbur frowned. “But your wings—”

“They’re fine.”

Tommy shrunk in on himself after interrupting Wilbur, as though disrespecting anyone was some sort of horrible crime. Honestly, knowing that Dream raised him, Wilbur wouldn’t be at all surprised.

“I know you’re black born,” Wilbur reminded him gently, “I don’t mind. You can show me your wings.”

Tommy shuffled uncomfortably, staring out into the distance as though he were considering making a run for it. Eventually, however, he sighed, unclasping the little metal clasp of his cloak.

“I’m only doing this because it’s uncomfortable and you already know,” Tommy said as he pulled his cloak off of himself and revealed his black wings.

Wilbur stared at them. They were... well, they were...

They were really *unkempt*.

Wilbur could see that they had been preened *relatively* recently, just because if they hadn’t Wilbur knew that they would look *far* worse.

But... the feathers looked *brittle*. And due to the wings themselves being bent underneath that cloak for a good many hours, the feathers were mostly out of place.

In summary, Tommy needed a good preening.

“Tommy,” Wilbur said slowly, “How often do you preen?”

Tommy tensed, his wings fluffing up in a tell-tale motion. Then, Tommy took a deep breath, almost as though he were reminding himself of something, though Wilbur couldn't even begin to imagine what.

"I preened yesterday," Tommy said quietly. His hands were shaking.

Wilbur let out a sigh. "Well that's good," he said, smiling at Tommy to show that he wasn't mad or anything, "Shall we do it again this morning?"

Tommy hesitated, as though debating something in his mind, or perhaps he just wasn't in the preening mood.

"I..." Tommy squared his shoulders. "What do you want?"

Wilbur frowned, raising his eyebrows. "I want you to preen?"

Tommy made a frustrated noise, shaking his head frantically like his life depended on it. "No, no, no," he said, "I mean what do you *want*? Preening's always a reward for something, right? So, what do you want?"

A reward? No, preening was basic hygiene, everybody knew that.

Then again, Tommy barely seemed to know how to make a nest last night.

The thought made Wilbur's blood boil, and he forced his anger not to show on his face, only barely managing to hold back an angry motion on his wing's part.

"I, I suppose I want you to have healthy wings," Wilbur said honestly, "That's the only reason I want you to preen."

Tommy frowned, as though this were a foreign concept. "But what do you want *before* it?" Tommy asked, his eyebrows furrowed, "Like, my father would always..." Tommy shut his mouth, looking at the ground.

Wilbur knew he wouldn't like where this one went, but he knew he wouldn't be satisfied unless he knew. "Would always?"

"It doesn't matter," Tommy said gruffly, "I just... let's just eat breakfast, okay? That's what Tubbo says at any rate, that you can preen after breakfast or something like that."

Wilbur had not the slightest clue who Tubbo was, but he sounded like a very good person if he managed to come up with a better alternative to whatever *Dream* gave him.

Tommy sat back down on the log in front of their ash-remains of a fire that Wilbur had tried and failed to recreate. Wilbur waited for him to comment on Wilbur's poor craftsmanship before fixing the fire himself.

Instead, Tommy pulled some very crushed looking strawberries from the knapsack he had been carrying around with him.

“Damn,” Tommy muttered to himself, poking at the remains of strawberries, “Oh well, they should be edible.”

Wilbur felt that now was likely a good time to intervene.

“I can cook something,” Wilbur said, “You don’t have to eat those.”

Tommy shook his head instantly. “I don’t want to owe you anything more than I already do,” he said simply, “I’m fine with these. Besides, they’re starting to go bad.”

“You don’t owe me anything,” Wilbur replied.

Tommy scoffed, rolling his eyes. “Yeah right.”

Almost instantly, Tommy pulled his wings around himself protectively. “Sorry,” he whispered, “I didn’t mean to be disrespectful.”

For not the first time, Wilbur felt as though a spear were entering straight through his heart.

“You’re fine,” Wilbur said quickly, “You can eat the strawberries if you’d like, but the offer for something else is still out there.”

Tommy nodded, still not looking up from the strawberries.

Wilbur was entirely out of his element. What was he supposed to do from here? Dream had clearly conditioned his baby brother into being afraid of saying one wrong word to any authority figure he saw. How could he manage to convince Tommy to trust him?

Something green flickered in the corner of Wilbur’s vision, and Wilbur jumped to his feet, his hand instantly landing on the hilt of his sword.

Tommy let out a whimper and flinched, his strawberries falling from his hands and onto the dirt ground.

Wilbur immediately sat back down, removing his hand from his sword.

“It’s alright,” Wilbur said gently, “I’m not going to hurt you.”

Tommy’s wings were still wrapped around him protectively, and Wilbur knew that Tommy didn’t believe him. But instead of remarking on it like Wilbur expected, Tommy instead stared dully down at the floor.

“I spilled my strawberries,” he muttered.

“That’s alright,” Wilbur said pleasantly, “I’ll just make us some eggs. You may need to help me with the fire, but—”

Almost instantly, Tommy got up and crouched in front of the fire, even though there wasn’t any usable wood.



“I’ll get some wood, alright?” Wilbur asked, slowly standing up. He was loath to leave Tommy out of his sight for even a moment, but he couldn’t exactly force Tommy to follow Wilbur around everywhere they went, and they *did* need wood to make a proper fire.

Tommy nodded. “Yeah, ok.”

Wilbur started walking away, his chest squeezing with anxiety at the thought of leaving Tommy behind.

Wilbur glanced behind him.

Neon green flashed in his vision.

Wilbur leapt over to Tommy, using his wings to cover the distance more quickly. He roughly grabbed Tommy and shoved him behind Wilbur, causing Tommy to let out a startled shout. Wilbur flared his wings out, trying to hide Tommy’s relatively small form behind them.

“What the hell—”

Wilbur shushed him, and Tommy fell quiet, clutching onto the back of Wilbur’s shirt.

Wilbur reached into the pouch on his belt, crushing one of Phil’s feathers in his fist. Instantly, Wilbur felt a vitality course through his veins.

Temporary immortality had a very strange sensation, if Wilbur was being completely honest. Of course, this wasn’t the first time he had used it. Wilbur had seen his fair share of assassins in his life.

They stood in their small clearing, barely breathing as Wilbur searched frantically for those horrifyingly familiar green wings.

The sound of footsteps crunching against the leaves seemed to echo like a funeral drum, and Wilbur’s wings bristled. Dropping the ashes of his father’s feather, Wilbur reached for his own golden feathers, ready to blow something up if need be.

And then Dream stepped into view, his white mask nearly looking like a demon. His green cloak matched the sickening color of his vulture-like wings, and Wilbur snarled at the sight of them.

However, there was something else that Wilbur was far more concerned over. Actually, it was *someone* else.

A child, about Thomas’s—Tommy’s age, was unconscious in Dream’s arms. There was a nasty gash on his forehead, and it made Wilbur sick to even see it there.

“Prince Wilbur,” Dream said, somehow managing to bow in the most exaggeratedly mocking fashion despite the fact he was carrying a literal human being in his arms, “It’s a surprise to see you here.”

Tommy was clinging onto the back of Wilbur's clothes so tightly that Wilbur felt mild discomfort. Of course, mild discomfort was nothing to the man standing in front of Wilbur, if he can even be called that.

"What do you want?" Wilbur said harshly, making sure to keep the golden feather in his hand hidden from view, recalling what Phil had always told him.

*With Dream, it's always better to try to catch him by surprise. Don't show him your hand.*

Wilbur sure as hell wasn't about to be careless now.

"You know what I want," Dream said softly, playing with a single black feather in his hand like it was nothing more than a flower petal, "Give him to me, and Tubbo won't die."

Wilbur's breath froze to ice as he stared at the unconscious child in Dream's arms. He was so young... could he really condemn the life of another child for the sake of his own little brother?

*Yes.*

Maybe it was selfish, maybe it made Wilbur a horrible person, but he knew he could not sacrifice Tommy's life for the sake of this other child's.

Tommy, unfortunately, seemed to have other ideas, letting go of Wilbur's shirt and trying to push past the protective barrier that Wilbur's wings provided.

"No," Wilbur said harshly.

"*No!*" Tommy screamed, trying and failing to shove Wilbur's wings away, "No, no, I'll go, I'll go!"

Wilbur didn't move.

Dream tilted his head, staring at Tommy's form peeking out from behind Wilbur's wings, no matter how hard Wilbur tried to hide him.

"Thomas," Dream said, his voice taking a commanding tone. Tommy froze. "What did I tell you about the royal family?"

Wilbur froze, and Tommy took the opportunity to duck underneath his wings. Wilbur unfroze himself only to hold his baby brother in an iron grip, stopping him to sprinting straight to Dream.

"Let go of me!" Tommy shrieked, and Wilbur tightened his hold on Tommy's arms. It hurt, it hurt like hell to see Tommy sobbing like this, trying to get back to Dream, trying to save this boy Wilbur didn't even know. "I'm sorry!" Tommy sobbed to Dream, "Please, *please!*"

"What-what talking about?" Wilbur demanded, trying his hardest to ignore Tommy's cries, "What did you *tell him?!?*"

“Thomas,” Dream said, a warning lilt to his voice.

In a terrifying motion, Tommy went dead still and stopped screaming. His black wings hung limply as Wilbur pulled Tommy closer to him, keeping him away from Dream.

“Thoma—”

“Stay the hell away from him,” Wilbur growled before he could stop himself, “Don’t speak to him.”

Tommy stiffened as Dream sighed, and Wilbur felt his own skin get goosebumps at the sound.

“Thomas,” Dream said again, “I’m going to give you a choice. Either you—”

“You will not—”

Dream didn’t let Wilbur finish his interruption.

“Either you let your friend die.” Dream nodded to the boy in his arms. “Or you kill the prince.”

Wilbur gaped at Dream in horror. Dream was just... going to give Tommy that choice? That wasn’t even a choice! Either way, it was going to only add onto the pile of trauma Tommy already had.

But Wilbur knew what needed to be done.

Wilbur had been willing to choose between Tommy and Tubbo, but he wasn’t willing to let Tommy be the one to choose between Wilbur and Tubbo.

Tommy was shaking, and Wilbur was pretty sure he was crying again. Wilbur gently spun Tommy around so that he was facing him.

Tears were indeed streaming down Tommy’s face, but there was something else. There was a dull, *defeated* look in his eyes but also a little bit of fear.

Wilbur hated it.

“It’s okay,” Wilbur whispered, “You can kill me.”

Tommy stared up at Wilbur in shock, his eyes wide. Wilbur mustered up a weak smile. He honestly wasn’t sure what would happen next.

Wilbur carefully took one of the black feathers bent too far out of shape on Tommy’s wings and pressed it into Tommy’s hand.

“It’s okay,” Wilbur said again, “I-I don’t mind.”

Tommy was shaking his head slightly, his entire body shaking. His wings were trembling, and Wilbur wished that they were preened more often.

“I—”

“*Thomas,*” Dream said sternly, sounding strangely like and yet nothing like Phil when he used to tell Techno and Wilbur to stop arguing.

Tommy slumped again, closed his eyes, and nodded, crushing the feather in his hand. Wilbur would’ve been shocked at how easy it was for Tommy to make the decision if not for the fact that Wilbur knew Tommy had been *conditioned* into doing this for Dream.

Wilbur decided that a glare in Dream’s direction would not at all be misplaced in this moment.

Tommy was still crying, and Wilbur gently patted his soft hair. “It’s okay,” he said for the third time.

Tommy took a deep breath and opened his palm, causing black dust to fall out of his hand and onto the dirt beneath them.

Wilbur took a deep breath, enjoying the feeling of air in his lungs.

Tommy slowly reached his hand out, still looking conflicted. Prime, he was going to feel horrible for this, wasn’t he?

Or maybe Dream would just convince him into thinking it was necessary.

Hopefully it wouldn’t come to that. Still, it would be nice to give Tommy a way to know it wasn’t his fault.

Wilbur grabbed Tommy’s hand himself.

The world disappeared.

## Chapter End Notes

(:

Oh you of little faith thinking Wilbur was stupid.

I’ll explain what happened to Tubbo in the *\*next chapter\**.

Thank you for reading, please be nice in the comments, and I hope you enjoyed! <3

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Summary

Tubbo be scared.

Tommy be scared.

Wilbur be angry.

## Chapter Notes

tw: death, concussions, abuse, manipulation, violence, explosions, trauma

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tubbo heard screaming.

His head pounded painfully, and Tubbo could feel something sticky against his forehead. Tubbo's wings hurt, for some reason, feeling slightly awkward and bent out of shape. He moved them slightly, not opening his eyes. The moved as Tubbo commanded, except something was in his wing's way, similar to people who hugged overeagerly and brought their arms over wings instead of under the wings.

Someone was... holding him?

Dad?

The screaming continued, heightening in pitch, and Tubbo's head throbbed all the more painfully. He let out a whimper, burying his face into his father's chest.

Everything hurt. What was even happening?

Tubbo felt the arms let go off him, and the next thing he knew, he was on the ground. He still hadn't even opened his eyes, but now everything hurt like those bullies when they had once bludgeoned him into the ground for annoying them.

Why had Dad dropped him?

"You did well, Thomas," a voice that was *not* Dad's, that sent chills down Tubbo's spine, that made Tubbo want to run and never return, "Stop crying."

The screaming stopped.

What was happening?

Tubbo slowly opened his eyes, staring up at some trees that covered up the blue sky. So... he was in a forest then. Why was he in a forest?

His head still hurt, and his eyelids were heavy. He kind of just wanted to fall back asleep.

But Tubbo could still hear muffled and keening sobbing, and he slowly turned his head in the direction of the sound.

His heart flipped.

Tommy was hunched over a man sprawled on the ground. Tears were streaming down his face, but that was hardly the most important thing in this situation.

*Dream* was crouched next to Tommy, preening his feathers. Tommy seemed to be melting at the touch, but it looked less like happy melting and more like... being *subdued*.

And then it all came back to Tubbo. *Dream* and Puffy's conversation; *Dream* kidnapping him; *Dad*—

Tubbo jerked to his feet, swaying as his head still felt like someone had slammed a rock into it. Which... *Dream* might have done. Tubbo didn't remember much after *Dad* started bleeding out, but he was pretty sure he had struggled enough to get *Dream* angry.

Tommy jerked his head up, looking up at Tubbo with wide eyes.

"Tubbo?" Tommy whispered, his voice choked with tears.

*Dream* let out a long-suffering sigh. "And here I was hoping you'd stay unconscious," he said, grabbing Tommy roughly by the arm and yanking him to his feet. Tommy let out a startled whimper, but he didn't resist as *Dream* continued to card his fingers through Tommy's feathers.

It was sickening.

Tubbo scanned the forest for anything that could be weaponized against *Dream* of all people. Maybe he could grow one of the trees? If only *Dream* was standing on a thorn bush, things would be so much simpler.

Prime, Tubbo really did have a useless power, didn't he?

Tommy was looking at Tubbo with pleading eyes, opening and closing his mouth in such a way that Tubbo got the distinct impression that he was trying to say "*fly*."

Flying was out of the question. Even if Tubbo could out-fly *Dream*, which was impossible, there was no way Tubbo could ever leave Tommy behind.

“You have two options,” Dream said, his voice smooth, “You can turn around and pretend this never happened, or I kill you.”

Tubbo’s vision was blurring, everything was happening too fast. He couldn’t just leave Tommy, but he was scared of dying. He didn’t want to die.

Tommy was gaping up at Dream. “But—”

“*Thomas*, ” Dream said warningly, and Tommy shut up.

Tubbo’s chest twisted up into a knot. He could barely breathe. He couldn’t leave Tommy, but he didn’t want to die, *he didn’t want to die*.

So Tubbo just stood still, swaying on his feet. He stared at Tommy before glancing down at the unconscious man before looking back up at Dream himself, who had his head tilted like he was waiting for an answer.

Tubbo’s throat was dry. What was he even supposed to say?

“I—why?”

Dream laughed. “I don’t need to explain myself to a child. Now make your choice”

“I-I—”

“Run,” Tommy whispered, “Please.”

Tubbo knew he should run, but his Dad was already dead, and he couldn’t lose Tommy, and he didn’t know what to do.

Tubbo took a stumbling step forward.

Dream tilted his head in the other direction, as though like a curious cat.

And then his mask burst into flames.

As it turned out, dying *hurt*.

The paranoid ones always assumed that, and Wilbur would never say that he wasn’t paranoid. He was paranoid, quite a bit actually, just not toward children.

He just... always assumed that death would be a release from the pain. Some of the older advisors mentioned how they could not wait for death’s warm embrace, and Wilbur had always found himself agreeing. Death was just another part of life, death was freedom from the horrifying world surrounding him.

Then again, was Wilbur actually dying?

Wilbur was staring into a void, so that was a pretty good sign that he was dead. Then again, if he were dead, why hadn't the pain stopped?

Maybe death was doomed to be painful. Maybe it was eternal punishment instead of peace.

If it meant saving Tommy and Tubbo, Wilbur didn't regret it.

And then a voice Wilbur never thought he'd hear again echoed above him. "*Wilbur, love.*"

Wilbur looked around frantically in the void, trying to reach out for the voice and only managing to feel searing pain as his insides felt like they were being ripped apart and knitted back together over and over again.

"Mum?" he asked, "Where are you?"

He practically heard his mother smiling when she next spoke. "*I'm dead,*" she said softly, "*But, you, darling, are not.*"

Wilbur blinked, gritting his teeth against the pain as it spiked in his chest. "Oh."

"*I'm so proud of you,*" Wilbur's mother whispered, "*I'm proud of all of you.*"

Wilbur swallowed, feeling the pain slowly recede. "I love you, mum."

"*I love you too.*"

And then the pain was gone, and Wilbur could feel the ground underneath him. There was a feather in his hand, one of his own, if he recalled correctly.

Wilbur heard voices.

"But—" Tommy's voice squeaked.

"*Thomas,*" Dream's voice was cold and harsh, and even Wilbur felt tempted to shrink away at the sound of it.

Instead he stayed perfectly still, flickering his eyes open ever so slightly to see what was going on.

Dream was standing, holding Tommy firmly by the arm. That alone made Wilbur want to leap to his feet and throttle him.

But that would be foolishness, so Wilbur stayed down.

What was far more interesting was that *Tubbo* was now awake, despite the bleeding wound on his forehead. The small boy was indeed swaying, though, and Wilbur knew that it was a miracle that Tubbo was still on his feet. As a matter of fact, Tubbo looked as though he wanted to collapse at any minute. Wilbur was surprised he hadn't already.



Wilbur took a careful and quiet breath, slowly crushing the feather in his hand and cringing at the small sound it made.

But they were talking again, and the sound was unnoticed.

“I—why?” Tubbo said, his voice trembling.

Dream laughed. “I don’t need to explain myself to a child. Now make your choice”

“I-I—”

“Run,” Tommy whispered, “Please.”

Wilbur opened his eyes a little more, staring straight at Dream’s mask. Magic coursing through his fingers, Wilbur snapped them.

And then many things happened at once.

Dream’s mask exploded.

Tommy shrieked.

Tubbo took a single step forward and collapsed.

Wilbur leapt to his feet, jumping on top of Dream and knocking him to the ground.

Dream snarled, his mask now cracked and crumbling from the explosion. Wilbur could see small burns blistering on his overly-pale face, and he *relished* it.

It was no less than Dream deserved, after what he did to Wilbur’s little brother.

Dream jerked his knee up, hitting Wilbur’s stomach. Wilbur gasped in pain, but he blinked through the automatic tears and grabbed tightly onto Dream’s wrists. Wilbur couldn’t let him grab any feathers; Wilbur couldn’t let him hurt Tommy.

“Wilbur?” Tommy’s voice was shocked and faint, and Wilbur resisted the urge to look up at him.

“Tommy,” Wilbur said through gritted teeth, struggling to keep his grip on Dream, “Give Tubbo the feather—”

Dream headbutted Wilbur, and Wilbur’s grip loosened. Instantly, Dream was on his feet.

“—and run!” Wilbur finished, jumping to his feet as he felt the world sway around him.

“Thomas—” Dream began, but Wilbur was already taking his own feather and aiming at Dream’s stomach. With a thunder-clap, Dream let out a momentary cry of pain as a small explosion was created on Dream’s stomach.

Wilbur turned to Tommy, who was still staring in shock. “Tommy, run, Tommy, run, Tommy, *run!*”

Third time was the charm, it seemed, because Tommy suddenly looked more aware, and he dashed toward Tubbo, who was still sprawled on the ground.

Wilbur returned his attention to Dream, reaching for another one of his own feathers.

But Dream had already pulled out one of his own, and he was staring straight at Wilbur.

*Crap.*

Wilbur quickly reached into his pouch for any defense feathers he could find, but before he could even begin to do so, Dream had already crushed the feather in his hand, snapping his fingers together.

Wilbur hunched over, letting out an agonized cry as wounds opened up in his stomach, only to be knitted straight back together again.

His feather was running out of time.

Wilbur glanced over to the boys, and Tommy was already helping Tubbo up.

Dream seemed to notice that too.

“Thomas,” he snapped, opening his neon green wings. Tommy froze.

No, not when Tommy was this close to escaping. Wilbur wouldn’t allow it. He wouldn’t.

Wilbur crushed his feather, looked directly at Dream’s wings, and snapped his fingers. Dream collided into the ground as his feathers burned away.

Feathers were like hair. The temporary immortality did nothing to regrow them.

And if there was one thing anyone was defensive over, it was their feathers.

Dream’s eyes flashed toward Wilbur, blazing with fury. Wilbur smirked, opening his own wings, leaping from the ground, and flying above Dream. As soon as Wilbur was above Dream’s head, he dropped, hopping to crush him.

Unfortunately, Dream was too fast, and he dodged out of the way.

Wilbur practically crushed the ground as he struggled to land properly on his feet. His ankles ached.

Wilbur glanced around. Tommy and Tubbo were gone.

Thank *prime*.

And then Wilbur’s mortality came crushing back down on him. His time was out.

Wilbur reached for another one of Phil’s feathers, but Dream was already down on him, holding a black feather over Wilbur’s throat.

Wilbur grinned.

“You’re going to kill me?”

Dream grinned right back.

“But that would be boring.”

## Chapter End Notes

I'm not sorry for this. (though i am sorry for the shorter chapter)

However, I am sorry for the fic i posted. If you want to check out the new fic in this series, please do and cry and suffer but at least it's not canon to this fic.

I hope you enjoyed, please be nice in the comments, and thank you for reading! <3

# Chapter 11

## Chapter Summary

Techno is the 'uman compass.

Tubbo gets comforted.

Wilbur gets -distant screaming-

## Chapter Notes

tw: torture pretty much, amputation, ptsd, crying, dream being dream, referenced blood, referenced kidnapping

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Technoblade hadn't meant to stumble across a dying man.

Honestly, it would be strange if anyone meant to do that. Technoblade would probably be concerned for their sanity.

As it was, Technoblade had *meant* to stumble upon Wilbur, who would also probably be dying, considering the mission he sent himself on. But instead of finding Wilbur, he heard some unfortunately loud screaming, so Technoblade felt morally obligated to take a look.

And that's how he found a man bleeding out in the middle of the forest.

Technoblade gave him one of Phil's feathers, which quickly sealed up the deep cuts across this man's stomach. Phil's feathers were really quite convenient with this sort of thing. Honestly, what was the point of healing feathers if you just had these?

Of course, Phil couldn't be everywhere at once, and his power was rare to the point of just one of a kind, so perhaps they should keep the healing feathers around.

Anyway, this was beside the point.

The point was that Technoblade was now sitting at this campfire, waiting for this guy to wake up; instead of doing something *productive*, like finding Wilbur before he got killed.

But, of course, this was Techno's luck he was talking about, so the dude didn't wake up until the early hours of the morning, which meant that Technoblade had lost an incredible amount

of time just waiting for one dude to be able to go on his way so that Technoblade could check his good deed of the day off his list and move on with his life.

But, finally, finally, the man let out a grown, shifting his red wings underneath him slightly. The man's eyes slowly opened, and he made a face of confusion as he brought a hand to his stomach.

"Finally awake?" Techno grunted.

The man's frown deepened. "What—"

The man suddenly jolted upright, his eyes wide as he looked around frantically. His eyes landed on Technoblade, and Techno vaguely wondered if this man was scared of him or something.

But no, the man jumped to his feet and stumbled toward Technoblade.

"My son," he gasped, "Tubbo. He's about eleven years old. Fluffy brown hair. Spring green wings. Have you seen him?"

Technoblade, in fact, had never seen an eleven-year-old with "spring green" wings, whatever that was supposed to mean.

"Um... no," Technoblade said slowly, "Something happen to him?"

It felt like a dumb question, but in Technoblade's defense, he wasn't entirely sure what to do with this situation.

"Dream, he took him, he—I need to find him—"

Techno was on his feet the minute "Dream" came out of his mouth. "You saw Dream?" he demanded.

The man nodded, running his hands through his hair. "Oh my prime, Tubbo, I need to find him, I need to—"

"Okay," Technoblade interrupted, "I'll help you find him, alright?"

The man froze. "Really?" he asked, his voice still sounding desperate. He probably was.

Techno hadn't forgotten those first months after Thomas was taken. Phil had been in a frenzy, snapping at any guard that moved wrong, jumping at every possible sighting, collapsing into broken sobs when he thought nobody else was looking.

So yeah, Techno had a pretty good idea of how desperate this guy probably was.

"Yeah," Techno assured him, "Can you at least give me your name?"

The man glared. "Why does that—"

“So that I know what to call you,” Techno interrupted, “And so you’re not a *complete* stranger, you know?”

It was pretty much a number-one safety rule as royalty that you don’t just go off with random strangers, and while Techno was one-hundred percent sure he could take this guy with his wings tied together, there was a certainly level of habitual anxiety that came with traveling with a complete stranger. So, Techno combatted that by simply asking for a name.

The man sighed. “Schlatt,” he said quickly, “You are?”

Why did Technoblade feel like he’d heard that name before?

Technoblade held out a hand. “Technoblade,” he said gruffly, “And don’t get all excited over it.”

Schlatt stared at Technoblade with an expression of shock before it turning to one of resignation. Not the usual reaction, but Technoblade would take it.

“Great,” Schlatt said shortly, shaking Techno’s hand with one jerky movement, “Now, my son.”

Ah yes, that.

*Dream.*

How Schlatt and his son had even gotten mixed up with Dream and his nonsense was beyond Technoblade, but he didn’t exactly have time to ask questions. Sure, Technoblade was *supposed* to be prioritizing Wilbur, but if Dream and a small child were involved, he was willing to make an exception.

Technoblade had already failed Thomas. There was no reason to fail this Tubbo kid too.

“Alright,” Technoblade said, pulling one of his pink feathers from his pouch, “You don’t happen to have any of your son’s feathers, do you?”

Honestly, Technoblade would be shocked if he *didn’t*. Most parents were the one’s preening their children, and a decent amount of them kept a collection of their kids feathers. While this would be considered a violation if anyone else were to keep the feathers, it wasn’t frowned upon when it came to parents. As a matter of fact, if parents *did* happen to throw away their children’s feathers, it was a sign of rejection more than anything else.

Schlatt’s hands instantly went down to his pockets, and as Techno suspected, he pulled out a single green feather.

“Why do you want it?” Schlatt asked, a protective edge to his voice.

See what Techno was saying? Parents were always touchy about this sort of thing.

“I need it so that I can track down your kid,” Techno said simply.

Schlatt thrust it into his hand immediately. Prime, it was a good thing that Techno wasn't a liar and was trying to steal all of Schlatt's feathers or something dumb like that.

Technoblade glanced down at the smallish feather that was now lying in his palm. He couldn't quite make out the green color Schlatt was talking about, but it was still dark, so it wasn't any real surprise.

Technoblade let the magic flow into his hand as he crushed his own feather. It crackled with magical energy, feeling a bit like a sparkling wine, and Technoblade quickly grabbed the kid's feather from his other palm.

Instantly, Techno saw a glowing, golden thread emerge from his feet, quickly snaking its way around the trees.

"Alright, let's go," Techno said, prepping his wings to follow the thread that was visible to him only, "Don't make me let go of this feather, or I'm going to have to do this all over again."

Schlatt nodded, and together they took off into the air.

There was an unfortunate set-back about Technoblade's ability, that being the pretty glowing path was only on the ground. This meant that Technoblade could not actually fly too high into the air, so he had to be *good* at maneuvering.

And Techno *was* good at maneuvering.

Schlatt... not so much.

He constantly scraped his wings against the trees, cursing whenever he did so. Still, Technoblade had to hand it to the guy. He didn't give up. Heck, he seemed determined not to slow Technoblade down.

The power of a fatherly love was strong, Technoblade supposed.

This Tubbo kid had managed to get *far* away, but Technoblade wasn't all that surprised. It had been hours since this Schlatt guy had fallen unconscious. The sun was about an hour into the sky by the time Technoblade saw the thread lead to not one, but actually *two* kids sprinting through the forest. One of them kept trying to push himself off the ground with his dark wings, only to tumble back to the ground.

Wait.

Technoblade did a double take.

Were those wings *black*?

Tubbo was running as quickly as he could, clutching onto Tommy's hand tightly.

They started to hear screaming in the distance, and Tommy tried to turn back, trying to get to the source of the screaming.

“Wilbur, he’s hurting him, we have to—“

“We can’t go back,” Tubbo argued, gasping for breath as he pulled Tommy away, “Hell take you.”

“Good!” Tommy shouted, “at least Wilbur—“

“No!” Tubbo protested, his voice high-pitched, “Not good!”

Tubbo didn’t want Tommy to be taken by Dream. Tommy was Tubbo’s friend; Tommy was the only person Tubbo had left. Dream had already killed his Dad.

Dream was the most terrifying man that Tubbo had ever met. Even now, Tubbo could see his mask against the back of his eyelids, the way Dream would tilt his head burned against Tubbo’s memory. Hell, even the way he would spread those giant wings like a vulture right before leaping into the air would likely haunt Tubbo’s nightmares.

“Why won’t you let me *go!*” Tommy tried to pick himself off the ground with his wings, but they weren’t in good flying condition due to their complete and utter lack of preening, and he didn’t manage to get very high up before coming back down.

“Because I care about you idiot!” Tubbo pulled against Tommy’s resistance, trying to get him farther and farther away from Dream. “I don’t want to lose you!”

“We’ll lose *Wilbur!*” Tommy sobbed, “He-he—”

“Think about it, Tommy,” Tubbo said seriously, “If you come back, what’s going to stop Dream—” Tommy stiffened at the name. “—from killing or hurting Wilbur anyway?”

Tommy stilled. “I could promise to come to him,” he whispered, “I could—”

From what Tubbo had seen of Dream, the chances of him handing over Wilbur no matter what Tommy could promise were next to zero.

“It wouldn’t work,” Tubbo promised, “It wouldn’t. Please, Tommy, let’s just go, let’s get away from here. *Please.*”

Tommy stilled, and his wings sagged slightly as he looked at Tubbo, tears flowing down his cheeks.

Another scream echoed through the forest, and Tommy’s head snapped back in the direction from where they came.

“Please,” Tubbo whispered, holding onto Tommy’s hand so tightly that he was probably hurting him, but Tubbo didn’t care. Tubbo didn’t care as long as Tommy came with him, away from Dream, away from the danger.



Tommy sagged slightly. “Okay,” he whispered.

That was all Tubbo needed to hear before he was dashing away again, dragging a shouting Tommy along behind him.

And then Tommy started keeping up, even going as far as to use his wings to propel himself slightly more forward, his cloak long forgotten.

It was nice to see Tommy use his wings so freely, even if they were currently running for their lives.

Tubbo wasn’t sure how far away they had managed to flee from Dream when he saw a large form in his peripheral vision, and suddenly he was tackled off of his feet.

Tubbo instinctively struggled at first, trying to reach for one of his feathers so that he could use a nearby sapling to hit his attacker with a grown tree or something.

“Tubbo,” the attacker whispered, sounding not at all like an attacker as they wrapped their wings around Tubbo protectively, “Oh prime, *Tubbo*—”

*Dad?*

Oh. Tubbo wasn’t being attacked. He was being *hugged*.

Tubbo scrambled to return the embrace, sinking into his father’s arms, wondering if this was even real.

“Dad?” Tubbo whispered, trying to look up to see his father’s face but only getting his head squished more firmly against his father’s chest, “Dad, you’re alive?”

His dad let out a choked sobbing sound, burrowing his face into Tubbo’s hair. “Oh baby,” Schlatt whispered, “Oh, yes, of course I’m alive, I’m so relieved to see that *you’re* okay.”

Tubbo let out a shaky laugh, but he felt tears begin to spill out of his eyes. “Yeah,” he whispered, “Yeah, I’m okay. It was-it was—”

And then Tubbo burst into tears.

Sobs shook Tubbo’s entire body as he struggled to breathe, but every intake of air sounded like he was dying, like this was the end, like there was no recovering. Every time Tubbo opened his mouth to speak, he could only manage a wailing moan.

He sounded like a baby.

But his dad was there, rocking Tubbo back and forth, rubbing circles into Tubbo’s back, gently running his fingers through Tubbo’s feathers, and Tubbo found that he didn’t particularly care that he was crying like a baby if it meant that he got to be comforted like this.

“It’s going to be okay,” his dad whispered, “It’s going to be okay.”

And Tubbo suddenly remembered that he wasn't alone.

"Tommy," Tubbo choked out, "Tommy, are you there?"

Tubbo couldn't see much with his face still against his father's chest, but Tommy's reply came from a little far away, sounding still shaken. "Yeah, I'm here."

Tubbo weakly reached out, but Schlatt seemed to get the message.

"Come 'ere, kid," Schlatt said, reaching out for Tommy to join the hug.

There was a small moment of hesitation, and then Tommy's thin form squished up against Tubbo, and his dad enclosed his wings around the both of them. And then Tommy started sobbing, babbling apologies incomprehensibly.

"It's all my fault, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, it's my fault, I shouldn't have—"

Tubbo was going to open his mouth and set Tommy straight, because Tubbo should have known better, it was his fault. But Schlatt shushed them both.

"This was neither of your faults," his dad said, "Please don't blame yourself for this."

So, both Tommy and Tubbo shut their mouths, clinging onto Schlatt for dear life. And even as Tubbo felt his tears calm down, Tommy's kept coming, and he actually sounded a bit like he was dying.

But there they stayed, safely tucked under their father's arms.

Wilbur's heart pounded against his chest as Dream began creepily moving his fingers through Wilbur's feathers, as though he were inspecting some prize that he had just won.

"You know what?" Dream asked softly, "You have a pretty strong power, you know that?"

Wilbur did know that, but he wasn't going to give Dream the satisfaction of a reply, so he kept his mouth firmly shut, trying to think of a way out of this.

If he could just reach for one of his feathers, maybe, just maybe, he could manage to catch Dream off guard and get away.

But Dream had both of Wilbur's hands tied behind his back, so that was incredibly unlikely.

Wilbur let out a shocked cry as Dream tightened his hand around one of Wilbur's flight feathers and painfully pulled it out with an ugly plucking sound.

Dream inspected the rather large feather with a mocking smile. "Of course, these feathers aren't particularly good for magic," he said, "Not too easy to crush in your hand. Now... maybe with a bit of experimentation... potions with magical properties would be interesting."

Wilbur's eyes widened. Potions were *dangerous*. Nobody had been able to properly develop them, and most attempts in doing so ended with the experimenter being killed. Those who survived the actual creating of the potions did not tend to make potions that didn't instantly kill the user of the potion, and the potions that didn't cause any death whatsoever usually didn't work.

But Dream sounded so *sure* of himself, as though he had experimented on potions before, as though it had *worked*.

"I mean, it would be nice to have more than just one," Dream mused, "Maybe if the potion thing doesn't work, I can make a pretty little wreath with these."

Dream... Dream was going to yank out all of his flight feathers. Dream was *going to yank out all of his flight feathers*.

Feathers didn't grow back if you plucked them out before their time. It damaged the follicles. If Dream yanked out all of Wilbur's flight feathers, Wilbur wouldn't be able to fly *again*.

And what was stopping Dream from taking all of Wilbur's feathers? What was stopping Dream from taking them all out painfully one by one until Wilbur looked like nothing more than a chicken being prepared for a feast?

Wilbur's heart beat frantically against his ribcage, and he struggled away from Dream with new vigor, desperate to get away from such a fate.

"You can't," Wilbur gasped, "Get away from me, get the hell—"

Dream laughed, grabbing Wilbur by the feathers and yanking out a whole handful. Wilbur let out an agonized cry, not wanting to look down at the featherless patch that was now in his left wing.

"I can," Dream cooed, running his fingers through Wilbur's feathers again, "Are you scared little prince? Are you scared of losing your precious feathers?"

This man was *evil*.

"Please," Wilbur gasped, "Anything, anything but—"

"You already lost me what I truly want," Dream said, his voice darkening, "So now you're paying the price."

Wilbur was shaking now. He couldn't lose his feathers; he couldn't. He'd endure torture; he'd take death, even. But his feathers were his pride and joy. He loved flying; he couldn't just *lose* that—

"Please," Wilbur said again, like that would change anything.

Dream sighed. "Very well," he said, pulling Wilbur's own sword from his hilt. Wilbur felt like a right fool now. Why hadn't he used his weapon earlier?

This was the last time Wilbur relied on feathers solely for fighting, even if it was up against Dream. He knew better than that.

“If you want to keep some of your flight feathers on your wings so badly, so be it,” Dream continued, looking at the emerald that was placed on the hilt of the sword, “But don’t expect to keep your wings.”

*No.*

Before Wilbur could say anything, Dream had already forcefully flipped Wilbur over so that Wilbur’s face was crushed against the dirt floor, and Dream had one hand firmly gripping his left wing.

“Don’t worry,” Dream promised, “I’ll only take one.”

Wilbur spoke frantically, ignoring the grass that had made it’s way into his mouth. “Please, no please, no—”

Dream brought the sword down.

Wilbur screamed.

## Chapter End Notes

Technoblade is the human gps that also gets himself some ariadne's thread.

Tubbo and Tommy get more HUGS :D

Wilbur gets a bad time. :)

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments. <3

# Chapter 12

## Chapter Summary

Techno panik and Wilbur has a bad time.

## Chapter Notes

tw: blood, amputation, internal injury, injury, creepiness, panic attacks, ableism sorta

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Technoblade watched mutely as a little boy with blonde hair and blue eyes and black wings clung onto Schlatt, crying like the world had come to an end.

There was a strange pull in Technoblade's gut as he watched the child babbling apologies, trying to take the blame for *Dream*. There was something in the way his crumpled black feathers caught Techno's eye, in the way he wanted to straighten them like a mother hen.

Technoblade *knew that boy*.

But Technoblade couldn't even begin to place *where* he could have seen this kid, and even he wasn't so socially inept as to know that interrupting a tearful reunion was probably the worst thing he could do.

The kids finally pulled away from their dad, although the blonde-haired boy's shoulders were still shaking, like he was trying to hold in his grief through any means possible and failing horribly.

"He got Wilbur," the boy whispered, his voice hoarse, "He got Wilbur."

Techno's heart stopped, and before he could stop himself, he was already grabbing the kid by the shoulders, looking him in the eyes desperately.

"Who got Wilbur?" Technoblade demanded, his voice probably harsher than it should've been considering the kid had been crying only moments ago.

The kid was frozen, his mouth opening and closing in silent motions, like he was stuck in front of a crowd without a speech prepared.

But this was his brother. Wilbur was Techno's brother, and he was the only one Techno had left apart from Phil, and Techno was *not* about to lose him to some *madman*—

A hand grabbed Techno by the shoulder, trying to pull him away, and Techno flared his wings out, baring his teeth toward his attacker.

It was Schlatt, and he didn't shrink back like anyone else might. Instead he continued pulling Techno away impatiently, giving Techno a hard look.

He looked a little like Phil did when Wilbur and Techno had taken things too far with their arguments.

"You're giving him a panic attack," Schlatt said, "Let go of him."

Techno looked back at the kid, and he was horrified to find that the kid was indeed hyperventilating, staring at Technoblade with unseeing eyes.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry," the kid was whispering to Technoblade repeatedly, like the words were his only shield from death itself.

Technoblade let go of Tommy's shoulders like they burned, and Schlatt continued pulling Technoblade away from the poor kid.

Technoblade backed away of his own accord, staring dumbly at the kid still pleading for mercy, collapsing onto his knees. Schlatt hurriedly went to probably try and pull him out of it, and Technoblade half-expected to see another group hug that he would just have to silently watch.

Instead, the green-winged kid tugged at Technoblade's cloak, giving Technoblade a haunted look.

"Dream," the kid whispered, "Dream has him."

Oh prime, *no*.

Technoblade pulled out another one of Wilbur's feathers out of his pocket (he had brought a good many for the journey to find him), and instantly crushed it.

And before the kid, Tubbo, could say anything more, Technoblade was already leaping into the air, following the golden path toward Wilbur.

Technoblade prayed he could get there before it was too late.

The world was ending.

The world was ending as Wilbur screamed for mercy, trying to free his wrists from the rope chaffing uncomfortably against his skin. The world was ending as Wilbur felt the sword go through his feather and bone, slicing cleanly through his entire wing. The world was ending as Wilbur felt his back get suddenly doused with hot liquid that he knew could only be his own blood.

Wilbur was barely aware of the sobs that were yanking their way out of his body; he was barely aware of the fact that tears were trying to drown him alive; hell, he barely comprehended his own screaming.

The only thing he knew was horrible, terrible pain as the one thing that should never be able to leave him got removed from his back in one of the crudest ways possible.

And then the pain was gone, leaving only phantom sensation of his wing behind him. For a moment, Wilbur could pretend that both of his wings were still there, that if Dream would just let go of him Wilbur could spring off the ground and fly far, far away from here.

Instead, when Wilbur tried to move his wings, only one of them moved with him.

Oh prime, Dream couldn't even be bothered to remove *both*. How was Wilbur going to be able to *balance* when he stood up?

Wilbur shuddered as he felt Dream's fingers run through his hair, a cruel mockery of Phil taking care of him when Wilbur got so sick he could barely get out of bed.

Normally, Wilbur would try to fight and struggle, maybe try to bite Dream's hand off, but he was so tired. He felt as though someone had taken an anvil and placed it on his chest, preventing him from wanting to move at all.

"Poor little baby bird," Dream cooed, "Flew too far from the nest, didn't you?"

Wilbur hated him; Wilbur *hated him*.

"Screw you," Wilbur whispered, trying to inject venom into his voice but only managing to sound like he was dying, "Why? *Why?*"

Dream laughed, tightening his grip around Wilbur's hair and pulling his head back. "Why?" he asked, his voice harsher, "Some of you have all the luck."

That... that didn't make any sense. What was that even supposed to mean?

"I don't—" Wilbur swallowed back a sob. "—I don't understand."

Dream let go of Wilbur's hair, and Wilbur's face landed uncomfortably against the dirt ground. A small part of Wilbur wanted to close his eyes and die, to just wait for the sweet release of death to come and set him free.

Dream's hands roughly grabbed Wilbur's shoulders, and Wilbur barely had time to gasp in surprise before he was rolled back over on his back. And now Wilbur was staring up at the brilliant blue sky hiding behind the leaves, and a yearning Wilbur hadn't felt since he was a toddler yet to learn to fly tugged at his chest.

He wanted to be up there in the glorious sky.

But Wilbur would never be able to fly again.

Dream's terrible mask suddenly appeared into view, blocking out the beautiful view of the sapphire sky.

"What to do with you?" Dream murmured, "Which do you think would hurt Philza more? Loosing another son? Or seeing how easily I *broke* you."

Wilbur felt like a knife had entered his chest at the words.

"You didn't break me," Wilbur said hoarsely, "I'm not broken."

Dream tilted his head like a confused child. "No?" he asked, his voice high-pitched and mocking, "You're still as unstoppable as you ever were?"

Wilbur didn't say anything, not even giving Dream the satisfaction of looking him in the eyes of that mask, instead aiming his eyes to the sky. He swallowed back the sob that wanted to break free.

Dream continued, beginning to preen the feathers that still remind on Wilbur's remaining wing.

"If I were to release you right now, would you able to fight me like you did just earlier this morning? Or would you collapse, like a baby bird who had fallen too soon out of their nest?"

Wilbur didn't understand why Dream kept acting like Wilbur was some fragile little creature. He was nineteen damnit, he wasn't a baby. Then again, he was sobbing like one. He was helpless like one.

And then Wilbur remembered Tommy, so young and so hopeless and so desperate for love that he accepted the warmth of a near stranger. Tommy had seemed so broken, haunted by the lives he had stripped from others, weighed down by the lies Dream had told.

It always came down to Dream, didn't it?

"I hate you." There was a wobble to Wilbur's voice as he tried not to cry. "You're a monster."

Dream sighed, picking a single neon-green feather off of the ground. Wilbur felt his stomach drop with dread as he realized what was coming, his mind flashing to the agony in his abdomen from before.

Dream ground up the feather in his palm, as though he were intentionally dragging out Wilbur's anxiety, his anticipation for the horrible pain to come.

And then Dream brought his fingers together and snapped.

And pain erupted inside Wilbur's still existing wing, as though a sword had sliced straight through its insides. Wilbur gasped in pain, tears spilling from his eyes.

Dream wiped the tears spilling from his eyes, and Wilbur wanted to vomit.



“Let me tell you a secret, princeling,” Dream said, pulling out another feather out of his pouch and using it to get rid of the pain in Wilbur’s wing, “We’re all monsters. I just chose to accept the role.”

Wilbur didn’t say anything, the imprint of the pain from before still haunting him. What did Dream even do? Did he damage Wilbur from the inside? That’s what it had felt like before, but he had been too shot full of adrenaline to really be paying attention.

Wilbur suddenly recalled Techno’s words on the day Thomas—Tommy had been taken.

*“He snapped his fingers,” Techno had whispered, “And one of the men collapsed, clutching onto his stomach like he had been stabbed, but there wasn’t any blood.”*

Wilbur squeezed his eyes shut, not wanting to think about this. He wanted to go home. He wanted both of his wings back. He wanted Phil. He wanted his mother.

At least Tommy was safe.

Wilbur snapped his eyes open at the sound of rustling leaves in the forest, and Dream also looked up in that direction.

“Well, I came to my decision,” Dream said, his voice chipper, “I hope you have a happy reunion.”

And with that, Dream jumped to his feet, spread his wings, and took off without another word.

And as Wilbur watched Dream fly higher and father up into the open air, hatred mixed with jealousy burned in his heart, and he wanted to scream at Dream’s retreating form.

He tried. He tried to shout. He tried to curse. He tried everything.

The only thing he could manage was a few muttered curses before sobs wracked his body all over again.

Prime, he was so pathetic.

“Wilbur?”

Wilbur knew that voice. Oh *prime*, Wilbur knew that voice.

And although Wilbur had wished for his presence only moments ago, he now wished that he could disappear. He wished that Technoblade wouldn’t see him in his disgrace.

But the footsteps came ever nearer, and Technoblade spoke through the cloud of his thoughts yet again, this time his voice far nearer and far angrier.

“What did he *do to you?*”

Wilbur didn't say anything in reply, but he did open his eyes and smile grimly at Technoblade's horrified expression.

Muttering a stream of curses under his breath, Techno hurriedly undid the bonds that tied Wilbur's wrists together, and he quickly pressed one of Phil's feathers in his hand.

Not even bothering to sit up, Wilbur weakly crushed it, praying that through some miracle his wing might return.

Anxious silence settled between them as they waited for the new vitality to do anything.

Nothing happened.

And although rage toward Dream churned in Wilbur's gut, although Wilbur was sick of it happening, tears started falling steadily down Wilbur's eyes, and he clutched onto Techno like a life line.

"He took it," Wilbur said hoarsely, the grimness of his tone sounding like a king on his deathbed, "My wing. He took it."

Techno's face looked like it went through the five stages of grief before finally settling back into anger.

"I'll kill him," Techno vowed.

If Wilbur looked hard enough, he thought he could spot some tears forming in Techno's very own eyes. Tears of horror or something else, Wilbur would never be able to guess.

Wilbur laughed grimly, hating how the action scratched at the soreness of his throat.

"We'll kill him together."

And with that, Technoblade wrapped his arms gently around Wilbur, pulling him into an awkward hug. But Wilbur returned it, because hugs from Techno were rare, and he wasn't going to miss this opportunity while it lasted.

"Oh," Wilbur said, suddenly remembering something that might be able to distract him from the overwhelming grief, "I found Thomas."

Technoblade sucked in a breath, and his hold on Wilbur became brittle.

"What?"

## Chapter End Notes

Short chapter but I'm sure you all will live.

I have no interesting notes, but here's a yellow rose for friendship.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments! <3

# Chapter 13

## Chapter Summary

Phil realizes things.

Wilbur and Techno have a talk.

Tommy makes a decision.

## Chapter Notes

tw: panic attacks, ptsd, implied/referenced child abuse, implied/referenced character death, referenced amputation, referenced torture, referenced kidnapping, referenced manipulation,

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Phil sat on his throne, having just completed a council meeting with his advisors. It was mostly concerning the Dream situation. So far, Dream had already cut through some towns, doing no harm to most of the residents except for a select few, which he had accused of harboring one of his own.

Dream was *looking* for someone.

Dream was looking for a young, black-born boy.

Phil had to crush the instinctual hope that arose with the thought. There were many black-born children in the world. It was more than likely that Dream was looking for some other black-born child that he wanted to use to his own ends.

Then again, not all black-born children were swiped from their cradles by Dream himself.

Could it be Thomas?

But no, Philza was all but certain that Dream killed little Thomas as soon as he was safely out of the castle. They had found blood mixed with black feathers outside that night.

Phil pinched the bridge of his nose, flexing his wings in aggravation. This line of thinking got him nowhere. This line of thinking would only cause him to chase after false hopes instead of focusing on what really mattered.

They needed to find and capture Dream.

Though, speaking of false hopes, Technoblade should hopefully be dragging Wilbur home any minute now. It had already been a day since Wilbur left, and Technoblade was only a few hours behind, so hopefully Phil will see both boys storming into the throne room, Wilbur likely wearing a stormy look on his face.

It was better that he look stormy than have fresh scars and ruined hopes.

As though Phil's thoughts summoned them, the doors to the throne room swung wide open loudly, and Phil looked up, ready to give Wilbur a lecture on regarding his own safety.

But it wasn't Techno or Wilbur.

It was *Puffy*.

Phil would recognize her anywhere, even if it had been nearly two decades since they had spoken. Her wings were spread wide and the color of the clouds, her curly hair sprung to action every time she took a determined step, and her face was contorted into one of such determination and fierceness that Phil himself felt like he were a soldier about to be sent to battle.

"Puffy," Phil said in greeting, standing to meet her.

Puffy stopped in her tracks and gave Phil a short bow.

"Your majesty," she said, her voice out of breath. Her feathers were puffed up like something was agitating her, and by the look on her expression, Phil would not find that at all surprising. "I saw Dream."

Phil froze. "Pardon?"

This shouldn't be a surprise. Puffy lived in the outer villages, which is exactly where Dream was currently making his way on his search for the poor black-born child that had become his target.

"Yes," Puffy said, her voice wavering despite the steeliness she was trying to inject into it, "He's stolen my friend's son hostage, and I didn't know where else to go. I'm sorry."

Oh prime, now Dream had a *hostage*.

"That's not good," Phil said dumbly, "That's really not good—"

"That's not it," Puffy interrupted, "I know the name of the black-born kid that he's looking for."

Phil started. Dream was really willing to share that much with Puffy? Surely he knew that Puffy would come straight back to Phil?

"And what is it?" Phil asked.

Puffy sighed, squaring her shoulders. “Thomas. He called him Thomas.”

*Thomas.*

Dream was looking for a Thomas. Dream was looking for a black-born child named Thomas. Dream had kidnapped Prince Thomas, Philza’s son, a black-born, from his home a little over ten years ago.

Philza would have to be an idiot to not connect the dots.

Thomas was *alive*.

Thomas was alive and being hunted down by Dream.

Phil stumbled backwards, flaring his wings back slightly and grabbing onto the arm-rest of his throne for support.

“You’re kidding,” he whispered, knowing that there was no possible way for Puffy to be kidding. Nobody outside of the royal family and staff had ever learned Thomas’s name. The rest of the kingdom was to learn after the naming ceremony, which had never happened.

“Does the name mean anything to you?” Puffy asked, “I thought the information might be helpful, but—”

“Mean anything to me?” Phil laughed, taking his circlet off to run his hair back with his fingers. “This means *everything* to me.”

Puffy frowned, looking confused, before her eyes widened. “You don’t mean—”

“That’s exactly what I mean,” Phil confirmed, gathering his balance again, “Puffy, tell my advisors that I need to leave temporarily and to not let anything burn down in my absence.”

Puffy now looked very startled. “Wait, you’re just *leaving*?”

Phil was already half-way to the window, but he turned around and leveled Puffy with a serious look. “That’s my son out there, Puffy,” he said, “I’m not going to lose him a second time.”

And with that, Phil unlatched the window and unfurled his wings, launching himself into the morning sky, just as the sun began peeking over the horizon.

Wilbur stumbled forward, leaning against Technoblade awkwardly.

Every step he took felt awful, his still existing wing weighing down on his left side, preventing him from even walking without nearly falling.

Technoblade was being kind enough to be a crutch for the two of them, but Wilbur still felt humiliated. He was supposed to be a protector. He was supposed to be better than this. He

was a prince, for prime's sake.

And here he was, stripped away of one of his most prized possessions, not even able to walk without the aid of his twin.

"You," Wilbur said as they continued stumbling forward, Technoblade walking slightly awkwardly due to Wilbur leaning against him, "are the worst help ever."

Technoblade snorted. "You're welcome," he muttered.

He didn't say it with as much lightheartedness as he might in any other situation. Of course, it wasn't exactly every day that you faced off against your mortal enemy and lost horrifically, so maybe Technoblade was right to be slightly more subdued.

Still, Wilbur hated it. He hated the painful reminder that Wilbur wasn't the same anymore, that Wilbur probably would never be the same anymore, that Dream had decided that he was going to do everything in his power to make the entire royal family miserable.

"Do you know how to get to Tommy?" Wilbur asked, trying to fill the silence. Technoblade seemed to be walking with some sense of direction, but Wilbur honestly had no idea if he was using one of his feathers or not.

Techno shrugged. "I don't have any of their feathers, but I can remember the vague outline of my route here," he said, "You know, good memory and all that."

Wilbur huffed. "Yes, nothing gets past the human compass."

"Still on that joke?"

"It's better than moping as we walk at a snail's pace."

Technoblade rolled his eyes. "I think in this situation, we're pretty justified in moping."

Annoyance rose up in Wilbur.

"I don't need your pity," he snapped, "I'm not even the one we need to worry about right now. Thomas—"

"Has Schlatt," Techno interrupted, "Which, admittedly, isn't much, but it's better than nothing."

Technoblade really didn't understand a thing, did he?

Wilbur laughed grimly. "I don't care about that," he said, "First of all, it doesn't matter who's there, because Dream always seems to manage to come out on top. Second of all, Dream has done so much worse to Tommy than I can even imagine, so I don't want us to mope about a lost wing."

Techno sighed. "Wil—"

“Techno,” Wilbur snapped back, “Just drop it.”

There was a moment of silence where the only sound was the two of them stumbling through the forest, hopefully making their way back to Tommy, Schlatt, and Tubbo.

It was strange, thinking about Schlatt being with Thomas. Wilbur recognized the name, of course. Schlatt was one of the few people who hadn’t immediately scorned Tommy for his wings, even without knowing that Tommy was the prince.

It had left an impression on Wilbur.

Of course, that entire day had left an impression on Wilbur.

It would have been hard for it not to when he saw the glint of neon green wings in the crowd of the market.

“Alright,” Techno conceded, “But we’re coming back to this.”

Wilbur would really rather never talk about it again, but he would take what he could get at the moment.

“Whatever you want,” Wilbur said with a sarcastic tone.

There was some more silence.

“You don’t seem particularly enthused over the fact that we found our long-lost brother,” Wilbur mentioned casually, trying not to sound too accusatory. It would do no good to spark another fight at the moment.

“Wil, just because I don’t react outwardly like you does not mean I’m not internally panicking,” Technoblade said dryly, “I just learned that the first interaction I had with my baby brother sent him into a panic attack. I am having a wonderful time feeling guilty about it.”

Wilbur frowned, giving Technoblade a look. “How did you send him into a panic attack?”

Technoblade sighed. “I wanted to know where you were, and I may have grabbed him somewhat roughly.”

Wilbur groaned. “Why would you do that?”

Technoblade sputtered defensively. “I didn’t realize he was my brother—”

“Oh, so it was a good idea to send a completely different child into a panic attack,” Wilbur said sarcastically, “Good to know.”

Technoblade scowled. “It wasn’t like that.”

“That’s what it sounds like.”



“I was just worried about you, okay?”

Wilbur started, seeing Technoblade’s face was red at the admission. Then again, Technoblade never had been one for such admissions.

“Well, try not to do it next time,” Wilbur muttered, glancing away and focusing his eyes on a vine climbing up a particularly large tree.

As Techno made a sound in the affirmative, Wilbur remembered when he was young enough to climb vines up the tress in the palace garden just to leap off of the trees and fly.

Wilbur wouldn’t be able to do that anymore, not without spirally out of control and crashing.

The thought hurt too much, so he pushed it out of his mind.

“Are we almost there yet?”

Techno rolled his eyes. “I don’t know, I wasn’t exactly timing myself,” he grunted.

Wilbur groaned.

Tommy didn’t know what was happening anymore.

He had tried to do what they wanted. He had tried to be *good*. He killed Wilbur when asked; he healed Tubbo with the gray feather when asked; he ran away when asked (although he was more reluctant with that one).

But instead, Tommy had managed to ruin everything. Again.

Wilbur had gotten hurt. Tommy could hear his screams. He was supposed to go back; he was supposed to beg for mercy; he wasn’t supposed to *continue running away*.

But Tubbo had insisted. Tubbo had kept pulling him away from Wilbur, and eventually Tommy had given in.

Tommy regretted it now after the pink-haired man had tightly squeezed his shoulders and demanded to know where Wilbur was. Tommy shouldn’t have left Wilbur; he should’ve saved him; his father would have left Wilbur alone if Thomas had just come back. Oh, why didn’t Tommy come back?

“Tommy,” Schlatt’s voice filtered through Tommy’s panic, “Can you hear me?”

Tommy nodded, taking a deep breath. He could hear Schlatt. He could do that much.

“Okay,” Schlatt said, his voice sounding soft like Sam’s, “Can you breathe with me?”

Tommy tried to suck in a breath, but it sounded like a wheeze, like that one time Tommy was sick and could barely move from misery. Sam had stayed with him, helping with the pain and

allowing Tommy to snuggle into him. Whenever his father came in, though, Sam had to leave again.

Tommy wished that Sam didn't leave.

And now his wheezing breathing was being mixed with suffocating sobs, and Tommy could barely see through the dizziness of it all.

"I'm sorry," Tommy managed to gasp out, "I'm trying, I'm trying—"

"It's okay," Schlatt said soothingly, "You're doing great. Try to breathe with me, okay?"

Tommy let out a high-pitched whine. He *wasn't* doing great. Why did everybody say he was? Tommy had... Tommy had *killed* Wilbur. And then he had left him with his father to be tortured and left to... left to—

And now his breathing was getting *worse*.

A new voice cut through the mix of Tommy's jumbled thoughts.

"Hey, Tommy," Tubbo was saying, "Can you feel the grass underneath you?"

Tommy brought his hands down to the grass he was sitting on, his fingers brushing against a few dead leaves. Eventually, however, he could feel the cold, silky smoothness of the grass.

Tommy nodded.

"Great!" Tommy could practically hear Tubbo's smile. "What about the leaves?"

Tommy brought his hands back to the leaves, and he crushed one in his fist, the crunching sensation so different from crushing a feather.

Tubbo continued telling Tommy things to see, feel, and smell, and soon Tommy felt his breathing slow down and his thoughts clear slightly.

Schlatt and Tubbo were sitting in front of him, looking worried.

Tommy hadn't meant to make them worried.

"Sorry," he muttered, his throat slightly scratchy from the harsh breathing earlier. He glanced down at his closed fist. He opened it, and pieces of crushed leaf fell from his hand.

"Don't be," Schlatt said, still not sounding mad, which didn't make much sense. Then again, nothing made sense these days. "How are you feeling now?"

Tommy hesitated.

"I killed Wilbur," he admitted quietly, "I-I killed him."

Schlatt's eyes widened, and Tommy felt his chest squeeze.

“It wasn’t like that,” Tubbo said, his voice slightly sharper than it usually was, “Tommy was either supposed to kill Wilbur, or Dream—” Tommy shuddered at the name. “—was going to kill me instead.”

The horror on Schlatt’s face seemed to worsen, and Tommy braced himself.

He let out another startled cry as an arm wrapped around him and pulled him toward Schlatt, squishing him in another hug, Tubbo by his side.

“I’m so sorry,” Schlatt whispered, “I was supposed to protect you, and I failed—”

No, that wasn’t right.

“It’s not your fault. It’s mine,” Tommy corrected, pulling himself out of the hug, “I shouldn’t have stayed at your house; I should have left sooner. Then nobody would have been hurt, and I—”

“And you would be stuck with him,” Tubbo said, his voice quivering, “How is that any better?”

Tommy scowled in frustration. “At least you would be safe.”

“But you wouldn’t!” Tubbo cried out, his voice cracking, “You’d be hurt.”

A strange heavy feeling rested on Tommy’s chest, and he only managed to spit out a few words.

“But you wouldn’t be dead.”

A long silence followed that, and Tommy waited for someone to shout, for someone to scream at him, for someone to hit him for arguing.

Instead, Schlatt made a weird expression and stood up.

“Well, none of us are dead now,” he said, “And that’s going to stay that way.” He looked over to Tubbo. “Remember when I said we’re going to the capital?”

Tubbo furrowed his eyebrows before his face cleared suddenly, and he began nodding furiously as he stood up. “Are we still going there?”

Schlatt nodded, holding out a hand to help Tommy up.

The image of Wilbur grabbing hold of Tommy’s hand before suddenly going limp flashed in Tommy’s mind, and Tommy quickly jumped to his feet on his own.

“I’m not forcing you to come with us,” Schlatt told Tommy, “But I think it would be safer for you if you went to the capital. The capital is one of the few places that Dream doesn’t feel completely safe openly marching into.”

Tommy’s breathing quickened at the mention of his father’s name again.

And... and the capital was where the palace was, right? So that was where King Philza lived. And could Tommy really be safe if King Philza was there, looming over them all, an ever-present threat of Tommy being taken away?

Then again, Wilbur had wanted to take Tommy to the capital.

Would he still want to do that, now that Tommy had abandoned him?

“I...”

Sam’s voice suddenly rang through his mind. *“Promise me you’ll find somewhere safe.”*

Tommy had nearly forgotten that promise. After being rejected the first few times for his wings, Tommy had forgotten that it was even possible to be safe.

“It’ll be safe?” Tommy confirmed, his voice barely above a whisper.

Schlatt nodded. “As safe as possible, at any rate,” he promised, as though it were that easy.

Tommy still wasn’t sure, but when he looked over to Tubbo and saw the sad expression on his face, Tommy realized he was willing to take that chance.

For Tubbo.

For Wilbur.

For Sam.

Tommy took a deep breath.

“Okay,” he said, “I’ll go with you.”

## Chapter End Notes

I'm back! Sorry this chapter took so long I took a break on Monday and then i was procrastinating on bjar so it threw everything slightly off.

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed, thank you for reading, and please be nice in the comments  
<3

# Chapter 14

## Chapter Summary

Techno reminisces and molly did not mean for it to go this far.

## Chapter Notes

tw: death, dream, kidnapping, grief, hypothermia, arguments, nightmares, implied/referenced child abuse, discrimination, referenced amputation, referenced panic attack, grief, violence

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Technoblade was eight, he learned a hard truth.

Nothing lasted forever.

When Techno's baby brother was born into the world, Techno saw a single healer step out of the bedroom, their wings puffed up and their skin pale, as though they had witnessed some impossible horror.

Both Techno and Wilbur were gripped with fear at that, fearing the worst, fearing their mother had died, fearing their baby brother hadn't made it.

But then Phil peeked his head out the door, smiling and telling them to come in and meet their little brother.

Both he and Wilbur hurried into the room, and Technoblade's eyes landed on the little bundle that was being gently carried in his mother's arms.

Wilbur instantly climbed into the large nest of fancy blankets and pillows, and Techno followed close behind.

"Can I hold him?" Wilbur asked, already scrambling up to their mother and peering down at the baby in her arms.

Kristin laughed. "Carefully now," she said.

Wilbur became very quiet and sat down in a more dignified position, and Mother placed the baby in Wilbur's arms.

Wilbur's eyes were blown wide, and Techno shuffled closer to him, wanting to get a good look at their baby brother himself.

His face was scrunched up, and his eyes hadn't opened yet. To be honest, he looked kind of weird, but he already had a fuzzy layer of blond hair on his head.

Babies were kind of gross.

Wilbur, however, seemed infatuated by the tiny being in his arms, cradling him closer and closer like he was the entire world.

Which, honestly, Techno thought might be a bit of an overreaction, but Wilbur could do whatever he wanted.

"Do you want to hold him?" Kristin asked, smiling gently.

Techno shook his head. Even if he didn't look so gross, Techno would be too scared of messing it up and accidentally killing the baby before he even discovered his name.

"What's his name?" Techno asked instead.

"Thomas," Kristin replied instantly.

"Thomas," Wilbur repeated, still looking down at the baby in his arms lovingly, "I like it."

"We're glad you think so," Phil said, a smile still on his face too.

Wilbur looked up at their parents with wide eyes. "Can we see his wings?" he begged.

The smiles on their parents' faces fell slightly, and they glanced at each other in that way they did when they were keeping some sort of secret or talking about adult things. Techno hated that look. He wasn't a baby; he wished he would stop being treated like one.

"What is it?" Techno demanded, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong with your brother," Kristin said instantly, "He's perfect."

"But... um... not everyone might see it that way," Phil said slowly, his voice sounding like it did when he was about to deliver bad news.

Even Wilbur seemed to pick up on it this time, because he looked up with wide eyes, somehow holding Thomas even closer to himself.

"What is it?" he asked, a high-pitched note to his voice.

"Darlings," Kristin said, taking Thomas back from Wilbur's arms and smoothing his basically non-existent hair on his head, "His wings... they're black."

There was a long silence.

Thomas was *black-born*.

Technoblade tried to wrap his mind around it. It simply didn't make any sense. Black-borns were dangerous. They were killers. They were threats.

And Thomas... he was a baby. If someone were to try to kill him, he'd be dead in an instant. He was so fragile, so small.

"What?" Wilbur asked, his feathers fluffed-up and his voice shaking, "But... he's so cute!"

"Boys," Phil said, leveling the two of them with a serious look, "Thomas' wings have no effect on his character. I think... I think we may have been wrong about black-borns before."

Wilbur was wide-eyed, but he looked back down at Thomas and nodded solemnly.

"I think so too," Wilbur decided, "He's too sweet to be evil."

Techno wasn't quite sure what to think. It had been a known fact for years that black-borns were dangerous and to be avoided, and now he was being told that maybe they weren't so bad, all because his baby brother was one with the dreaded feather color.

It was all so strange.

But he nodded anyway, because he doubted that Phil would take no for an answer when his voice was so serious.

They were told not to talk about the wings to anyone else, although Techno wasn't entirely sure how well Wilbur held to that rule. He had all of a sudden gotten incredibly fierce when it came to black-borns.

For instance, when their history tutor was talking about the black-born insurgence and the mass incarceration of black-borns that followed, Wilbur had crossed his arms and said stoutly, "I don't think they should have imprisoned all those black-borns."

Their stiff-backed tutor somehow stiffened more, his wings raised in shock.

Technoblade only gave Wilbur an unimpressed look. Was he really going to get into an argument with their tutor when it came to an event that had happened centuries ago?

"Prince Wilbur, are you questioning the decisions of your ancestors?"

Wilbur frowned. "I'm just saying, it's not very fair," he said, "Not every single black-born attacked those people, and yet all of them were imprisoned anyway!"

Technoblade frowned. Wilbur had a point. It did seem pretty unjust to imprison all of them.

"They were dangerous," the tutor said, looking more and more agitated by the minute.

"They had *families*," Wilbur protested.

The tutor snapped the history textbook closed with a loud thump. “And has it occurred to you, your highness, that Dream had a family once? Because, despite popular belief, he was not simply summoned into existence.”

Techno felt his wings go on edge at the mention of Dream. He and Wilbur were to fear him as much as they were supposed to avoid black-borns. The idea of the dude that gave them nightmares at night having a family was... weird.

From the startled look on his face, Wilbur agreed.

“But black-borns aren’t Dream,” Wilbur protested, “They—”

“Prince Wilbur, I am here to teach you history and that’s what I am going to do, kindly keep your opinions to yourself for the rest of the lesson, or I will be forced to inform your father of your unseemly behavior.”

Wilbur shut his mouth and stood up suddenly, marching out the door, leaving Techno to suffer his history lesson alone.

Later, after Wilbur had returned and suffered the consequences for walking out during lessons, he told Phil and Kristin about this rich teenager Wilbur had apparently met who didn’t hate black-borns at the dining room table.

Kristin had smiled. “I would like to meet his young man,” she said.

“He had a baby,” Wilbur said, “Pretty green wings. He said his name was Schlatt.”

“Schlatt?” Phil clarified, “You mean the owner of the business? The one we get our wines from? You’re telling me he’s a kid?”

“He’s a teenager,” Wilbur corrected thickly, his mouth full of bread, “You should’ve seen the look on his face when I told him I was the prince.”

Phil had frowned at that.

“Did you tell them about Thomas?” he asked.

Wilbur looked down at his plate, picking at the food with his fork. “No,” he murmured.

Techno could tell he was lying, or at least half lying.

Phil placed down his fork and gave Wilbur a long look.

“Wilbur,” he said slowly, “Do you realize what might happen if rumors start spreading about Thomas’ wings?”

Wilbur glared at his plate. “People are stupid; they shouldn’t care.”

“That’s not the point,” Technoblade replied, finally contributing to the conversation, “They’ll probably want him dead or something.”



Wilbur's head snapped up. "Don't say that!" he snapped.

"I'm just—"

"Boys," Phil interceded, his voice stern, "Worst case scenario, yes, they might want him dead. Best case scenario, we've got distrust and fear running through the kingdom while Dre —"

"*Phil*," Kristin hissed, interrupting whatever Phil was about to say, "It's done. Let's resume dinner."

"It's important they know this, Kristin," Phil said sternly.

"Someone was going to find out eventually," Kristin countered, putting down her own fork with a clatter, "You can't lock him away forever."

"It's not that simple," Phil protested, "This is for Thomas' safety as well as the kingdoms—"

"And what about his happiness?" Kristin gave Phil a burning look. "Would you really rob him of that?"

"Of course not."

"Then you can't lock him away like you're *ashamed*—"

Technoblade cleared his throat, glancing over to Wilbur, who was staring at his lap, making that face he made when he was trying not to cry.

"Could we be excused?" he asked, "Wilbur has some more history to study anyway."

Wilbur gave half-hearted protest, but when Kristin nodded, he fled the table as eagerly as Technoblade, leaving their parents to have their argument outside of their hearing.

Wilbur went to his own room, and after a few moments of consideration, Technoblade decided to follow.

He found Wilbur in his nest, his golden wings wrapped tightly around himself, serving as both a blanket and a shield.

"What do you want?" Wilbur snapped, his eyes red and puffy.

Technoblade wasn't very good at these sorts of situations, but he was pretty sure that you started by making sure the person crying was okay, which honestly sounded stupid, but whatever.

"Are you okay?" he asked awkwardly.

"I'm *fine*."

"You're crying."

“I am not!” Wilbur’s voice cracked, and Technoblade tried not to feel increasingly uncomfortable as Wilbur covered his face, trying to hide the tears that were running steadily down again.

Techno stepped further into the room, carefully shutting the door behind him.

“Do you... uh... do you want to talk about it?”

Wilbur hesitated for a moment before bringing his knees to his chest and nodding.

Technoblade climbed into the nest and sat down next to Wilbur, who moved his wing so that it could wrap around Techno. In turn, Techno moved his own wing to go around Wilbur.

“Did I mess things up?” Wilbur whispered, sniffing, “Is Thomas going to get hurt because of me?”

Techno frowned. To be honest, he was sure.

“I didn’t mean to,” Wilbur continued, trying to wipe his tears away with the side of his sleeve, “I just wanted to show people that black-borns weren’t all bad, that they weren’t evil because of their wing color, but most of them didn’t even believe me.”

Techno snorted. “People are stupid.”

“You think I’m right, right?” Wilbur asked, a pleading tone to his voice, “Not all black-borns are bad?”

Techno thought back to the way Thomas had smiled and made a strange giggling sound at the stupid noises that Wilbur was making at him earlier that day. It was hard to think of him as anything more than a definitely-not-cute baby.

“Yeah,” Techno agreed, “Not all black-borns are bad. That’s like saying you’re bad for being able to blow things up.”

Wilbur mustered a small smile. “Or that you’re good at geography because you can track things.”

Techno made an offended noise. “Hey, I’ll have you know that I am very good at geography.”

“Not as good as me,” Wilbur said, sniffing smugly.

“At least I can avoid arguments with the tutors.”

“He was being stupid.” Wilbur furiously wiped more tears from his eyes. “Saying that black-borns are dangerous. Thomas couldn’t hurt a fly.”

“Well, technically, he’s not three, so—”

“Oh, shut up, Techno.”

Techno and Wilbur sat there for a while, just satisfied to be in each other's warmth. Then, an idea sparked into Techno's mind. Wilbur was worried about endangering Thomas, right? So, what if someone was there to make sure nothing ever happened to him? Other than his assigned guards, obviously.

"What if we switched turns watching him?" Techno asked, "Then we can make sure that he doesn't get hurt."

Wilbur had brightened at that. "Yeah!" he agreed, "That's a good idea!"

Wilbur had gone first, and the sun was getting ready to set when he and Techno switched.

"He's asleep," Wilbur informed Techno, "But he still looked cute."

Techno nodded. "Okay," he said, glad he had brought a book to read at the candle-light, or else he might find himself somewhat bored.

Wilbur had looked anxious at the idea of leaving Thomas alone, but Techno pushed him out the door, reminding him that he still had history to make up for. Wilbur paled at the reminder, and he hurried out of the room, rehearsing past kings.

Techno was so glad he had all of that done with for the day. Now, he could just read his book and relax while making sure nothing happened to Thomas.

The sun had set all the way, and Techno was half-way through a really intense part of his book when he heard a thumping sound.

Techno froze, and his head snapped to the window.

Nobody was there, and Techno hesitantly returned to his book.

And then there was a clicking sound, and Technoblade gasped when a breeze entered the room. He looked up again to see the windows open and somebody climbing *into* the room.

In the candle-light, Techno could see green wings and a terrifying white mask.

*Dream.*

He opened his mouth to scream.

But with a flash, Dream was in front of Techno, a gloved hand clamped over Techno's mouth, and only a muffled sound came out.

Techno's wings were shaking as Dream leaned in terrifyingly close, his masked face inches away from his ear.

"Hush," he whispered, "I'd hate to see anyone get hurt."

Technoblade found himself nodding frantically, and Dream let go of him, stepping away from Techno and moving toward Thomas' cradle.

Technoblade did the only reasonable thing.

“HELP! DREAM’S WITH THOMAS—”

And Dream was already on him, slamming Techno to the ground. Technoblade gasped as he felt all of the wind get knocked out of him.

But it was too late. Already, the guards outside the door were thrusting it open, marching inside with swords drawn and feathers in hand.

Dream laughed. “You think that can stop me?” he asked calmly, as though he had done this a million times before.

Techno watched in horror as Dream pulled two neon green feathers out of his pouch, dodging the guard’s swipes of their swords with expert efficiency.

Dream crushed both feathers in separate hands, snapping one finger.

One of the guards instantly toppled over. Techno was too afraid to tell if he was dead or simply unconscious.

Dream spun around to look at the other guard, and before Techno could even shout, Dream had already snapped his fingers, and they toppled over as well, this time clutching their stomach like they’d been stabbed.

“Oh,” Dream said, his tone sounding disappointed, “I missed.”

Dream picked up one of the swords that clattered to the ground, and Techno suddenly realized that he had to do something.

So, without thinking, he pulled himself to his feet and sprinted toward Dream, moving to pick up one of the swords as well.

Dream laughed again, kicking Techno before he got close enough to do anything useful.

Techno let out a pained cry as his back hit the hard ground, and he knew that would bruise. Or, it would bruise if Techno managed to live through the night, which he was beginning to doubt.

Techno shut his eyes tightly when Dream brought the sword down on the still-conscious guard. He didn’t want to see it.

Unfortunately, he hadn’t turned off his ears, and that sound would be something that would haunt him for nightmares to come.

And suddenly, Techno was alone. Alone with Dream, the most feared man in the entire kingdom, maybe even the entire world.

And nobody was there to protect Thomas.

Techno opened his mouth to shout again in the hopes that someone might overhear, but Dream bent down and pulled a long piece of fabric out of his pocket.

“You really are a noisy one,” Dream sighed, as though Techno were being a minor inconvenience during a stroll through the garden and hadn’t literally killed two people.

Technoblade managed to let out one more shout before Dream was stuffing the gag into his mouth and tying painfully. Then, Dream pulled out more cloth (apparently, he had been prepared), and he tied up Techno’s wrists and ankles.

Dream clapped his hands together when he was done. “There we go!” he said cheerfully, “Admittedly, it would have probably been easier to kill you, but that would have been less fun, so…”

Techno continued struggling and making as much noise as possible, even though he was completely tied up.

Dream ignored him, standing back up and walking back toward Thomas’s crib, lined in blankets like a nest.

Panic gripped Techno all the more, and he continued to struggle, uselessly trying to flap his wings to propel him toward the crib and stop that masked monster from taking *his* baby brother.

Techno had promised to protect him. He had promised to protect him and he was failing even that much.

Pathetic.

Dream looked into the crib and made a sick cooing sound as he reached inside. “Aw,” he said, “He’s so adorable.”

Techno let out an angry statement that was supposed to be along the lines of “*Don’t touch him*”, but it was muffled by the gag.

Dream pulled Thomas out of the crib, and Techno noted that he was holding him properly, which was weird.

“Look at him,” Dream continued, gently stroking the sleeping baby’s tiny, black wings, “So small. So innocent.”

Techno wanted to do something. He wanted to kill Dream. He wanted to rip free of these bonds and tear the man apart limb from limb.

But Techno couldn’t do anything, and he was forced to watch as Dream fished a blanket out of the crib and tucked it gently around Thomas.

“He’d make a fine prince.” Dream tilted his head down at Technoblade. “But you have two to spare. Nobody will miss him.”

No.

*Dream was going to kill Thomas. Dream was going to kill Thomas and it was all his fault.*

“What’s his name?” Dream asked, “Thomas, right? That’s what you said earlier?”

Techno glared, letting out a growling sound.

Dream laughed, and the sound was terrifying in the dimming candlelight.

“Goodbye, Prince Technoblade.”

And then Dream was leaping out the window, and Techno was helpless to do anything about it.

Phil, Kristin, and Wilbur had come sprinting into the room, and Kristin had instantly let out a wail upon seeing the scene. Wilbur let out a short gasp, taking a large step back, and it was Phil who hurried forward, untying Techno and asking frantic questions.

Techno had managed to explain what had happened before clamming up entirely.

Things had gotten worse after that.

It took Techno a week to finally speak again. By then, everyone had used both Technoblade and Thomas’s feathers dry, and they had found no trace of Thomas. Technoblade didn’t know why, and it wasn’t until later that Techno would learn that his tracking power only worked if the feathers of the person he was tracking also had the ability to syphon in them.

Thomas was a newborn, and there had been no magical ability in his tiny, baby feathers.

Wilbur had gone through varying stages of grief, from sobbing in his bedroom, to yelling at Techno for not doing more, to insisting that Thomas was fine and they would see him again, not particularly in that order.

And then, about a year after Thomas was taken and he was presumed dead, their mother had gotten sick.

She died in the middle of the night.

It was the beginning of winter at the funeral, and snow had begun falling halfway through the ceremony.

Normally, he and Wilbur would be out there building a snowman or something.

Instead, snow was the last thing on Techno’s mind as a single thought pulsed over and over.

*Nothing could last forever.*

Not Thomas. Not Kristin.

Techno wondered who would be next.

The night after the funeral, while Techno was staring at the ceiling and trying to forget a nightmare that had jolted him awake, Wilbur had barged into Techno's room and shut the door behind him.

Before Techno could even ask what Wilbur was doing, Wilbur was already putting a finger to his lips.

"We're finding Thomas," Wilbur said resolutely, "He's out there, and we're going to find him."

Techno wanted to protest, wanted to tell Wilbur that Thomas was gone, that he wasn't coming back, that there was nothing they could do.

But there was a certain amount of fire in Wilbur's eyes that made Techno realize that he wasn't going to let this go.

And besides, Techno was desperate to find his baby brother as well, even if he was probably dead.

So, Techno crawled out of his nest and pulled open the latch to his window, and both he and Wilbur shivered at the sudden burst of cold air.

Still, there was no going back now, so they both jumped out of the window and flew out into the night.

Hopefully they'd be back before Phil noticed and got worried.

The snow was falling again, but that didn't stop Techno and Wilbur from searching for hours, desperate to find any sign of Dream, desperate to find a way to kill him and get their little brother back.

Eventually, they got too exhausted to fly, and they began walking, standing close to each other to keep warm against the impossible cold.

And then walking became sitting against the wall of a nearby store.

And then sitting became fighting to stay away as the cold made Techno feel completely numb inside.

"I'm sorry," Techno whispered, his teeth chattering together obnoxiously, "I should've saved him."

Wilbur scowled. "It's not your fault," he snapped, "It's mine."

That was the stupidest thing he'd ever heard.

"No, it's not."

“Yes, it is.”

Techno and Wilbur moved their wings in an attempt to better shield each other from the falling snow, but it only sort of worked.

“I love you,” Wilbur whispered.

“Love you too,” Techno whispered back.

They might freeze to death, but at least they would see Kristin again. Hopefully Phil wouldn’t be too sad.

Techno was half asleep when he saw Phil through heavy eye-lids, and then arms were wrapping around him and lifting him off the icy ground.

The next thing Techno knew, he was in his nest and under a bunch of blankets, and he felt absolutely *miserable*.

Hypothermia, apparently. Wilbur got it too.

Phil had hugged them tearfully, begging them to never do that again.

“I can’t lose any more children,” he whispered, holding both Technoblade and Wilbur so close that Technoblade could hear the beating of Phil’s heartbeat as Phil stroked Techno’s hair.

“Okay,” Techno whispered.

Wilbur had only nodded.

After that, Techno gave up on looking for Thomas, who was probably dead anyways, and instead focused all of his attention on combat training.

Wilbur joined him, and together they managed to become a decent force, able to take on anyone who challenged them in a sparring match, even without the help of feathers. *With* the help of feathers, well... let’s just say that no training dummy was left unscathed.

Despite the holes that Kristin and Thomas had left behind, things seemed to be improving. Phil, Techno, and Wilbur were relatively happy, managing to heal from all the hurt that had been dealt.

And then Dream had to be spotted at the outskirts of the empire.

As soon as Wilbur heard the news, he stormed to Phil’s office, and Techno hadn’t heard from him since until Phil went to Technoblade, begging him to track down Wil before he did something stupid like *fight Dream*.

Technoblade was sometimes astonished by his own brother’s stupidity.



So, Techno had done exactly that, and what had he found?

An injured man with his son being held captive by Dream.

A black-born kid that he accidentally sent into a panic attack.

*Wilbur*, who was now missing a wing, once again reiterating that *nothing ever lasted*.

Except Wilbur insisted that it didn't matter that Dream had literally hacked off one of his wings, instead saying,

"I found Thomas."

Technoblade felt like every piece of his being had been sucked out of his body at that statement.

Thomas was dead. *Thomas was dead*. They had even held a small funeral for him after a couple of years, and he and Wilbur had tried not to cry like babies when they were having a dignified ceremony with dignified guests. They had only been semi-successful.

Nothing lasted forever, and Thomas' time had long been up.

Except it wasn't.

Because Thomas was that *black-born kid Techno had sent into a panic attack*.

Techno had seen his baby brother for the first time in over ten years and the first thing he does is send him into a panic attack.

Shame curled around Techno's chest even as he helped Wilbur to his feet, and they began their tedious march toward where Techno had left Schlatt.

If Schlatt was smart, he'd have cleared out the area by now, but Techno could be optimistic and hope that he had left a feather there as well.

Or maybe Techno was clinging to straws, but if Thomas was with that group, he really couldn't afford to lose track of them.

Wilbur, frustratingly enough, was refusing to address the elephant in the room that was his wing, but Techno honestly didn't want to talk about how he had managed to fail again either, so he didn't push it too much.

Instead he focused on how reality had completely flipped on it's head.

Nothing lasted forever.

And yet Thomas was alive.

It was so against what Techno had ever allowed himself to think, clinging onto Thomas' death almost like a safety net. Because while Wilbur could hope that Thomas was alive,

Techno knew that being raised by Dream may as well be a death sentence in itself.

They reached the clearing that Techno had left Schlatt in, and he found that Schlatt had indeed vacated the premises.

But he scanned the area for feathers, and he grinned when he saw one of the Tubbo kid's sitting on a bush, the green of his feather almost blending in perfectly with the color of the leaves.

"Did you find something?" Wilbur asked, weighing Techno down as he hurried toward the feather. Not that Wilbur didn't have a perfectly valid reason to slow Techno down; it was just a bit unfortunate.

"As a matter of fact, I did." Techno snatched the feather from the bush and pulled out one of his own from his pouch.

"Nice," Wilbur remarked, "Then we can get to Thomas, and make sure he's okay—"

"And make sure *you're* okay," Techno reminded him pointedly as he crushed the feathers in his hand.

Wilbur scoffed and rolled his eyes. "We already did that," he said, "It's Thomas' turn."

Techno sighed, staring at the threat path before him. "Alright then," he said, "Let's get a move on, then."

They had been walking for maybe another twenty minutes when Wilbur glanced up and frowned.

"What's that?" he asked, his eyes widened, "Oh crap."

Techno's head snapped up to where Wilbur was looking, half-expecting to see Dream circling them like a bird of prey.

Instead, he saw the familiar plumage of gray wings above them.

Techno smiled.

"Dad."

## Chapter End Notes

This chapter wasn't supposed to be this long but I guess it makes up for my shorter streak recently.

Bjar will be tomorrow i promise.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments <3

# Chapter 15

## Chapter Summary

Wilbur sees Phil.

## Chapter Notes

tw: referenced amputation, ptsd, implied/referenced child abuse, poor self-care

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Dad.”

Wilbur felt a rush of panic as Phil’s silhouette approached, and he quickly brought his one wing closer to his back, tucking himself slightly behind Technoblade.

“Do you have a cloak?” Wilbur asked quickly, recalling the cloak that Tommy used to wear in order to hide his wings.

Technoblade gave Wilbur a strange look. “What are you doing?” he asked.

“Nothing,” Wilbur said just as quickly, “I just want to know if you have your cloak. I’m cold.”

He wasn’t, actually. The summer heat was as strong as it ever was, and even though the trees brought cool shade, it would be ridiculous to say that it was anything remotely close to cold.

“It’s summer,” Technoblade reminded Wilbur, and he brought a hand up to Wilbur’s forehead, “Are you feeling alright? The past few hours haven’t given you a fever?”

Oh prime, this was far more humiliating than it needed to be. Couldn’t Technoblade just stop asking questions and answer *Wilbur’s* question already?

“I’m fine,” Wilbur snapped, “I just wanted a bloody cloak, it’s a yes or no question.”

“And I just struggle to see why you need a cloak in the dead of summer.”

One of these days, Wilbur was going to strangle Technoblade in the dead of night. Nobody would be able to trace it back to him, and Wilbur would live a nice, Technoblade-free life where people just gave him a cloak when he asked for one.

Wilbur glanced up at the blue sky, and he was horrified to see that Phil had gotten closer, his form much more defined than it was before, his large wingspan beginning to cast a shadow on the earth.

“Fine, I’m not cold.” Wilbur tucked himself a little bit more behind Technoblade, “But surely you have something?”

“Why do you want it?” Technoblade asked, his voice suddenly sounding suspicious.

“No reason,” Wilbur said.

And then it was too late, and Wilbur could see Phil spread out his feathers and land in front of them with a graceful thump. Unlike Wilbur, Phil looked no different than he had the day before, his gray wings perfectly clean and completely whole, all of his feathers intact, his eyes wide but free of tears.

He was everything that Wilbur had ever wanted to be.

“Boys,” Phil said, thrusting himself toward them in a way that was truly unbecoming of an emperor, “Are you alright? Did anything happen? Did you meet—”

“We’re fine, Phil,” Technoblade said, a note of exasperation in his voice, “Well, actually, *I’m* fine. I didn’t even see Dream.”

Phil’s attention instantly snapped over to Wilbur, and Wilbur forced himself to stand taller, tucking his only wing behind himself more, hoping that it was all but invisible behind his back.

“I saw him,” Wilbur said, the words coming out in a rush, “But that hardly matters now. Dad, I saw Thomas, I found him, we need to find him—”

Phil rested a hand on Wilbur’s cheek, and Wilbur felt the air leave his lungs. The touch should be warm, comforting even, but instead Wilbur could only remember the way Dream had brushed the tears from his eyes, speaking to him in that mocking voice, treating him like a *child*.

Phil quickly took his hand away, and Wilbur forced himself to ignore the lingering impression that the touch left behind and instead tried to breathe again.

“What happened?” Phil asked. His voice was hard and stern, but it was in a caring way, and Wilbur found that he preferred it immensely over the higher pitched tones that Dream used on him.

“Nothing happened,” Wilbur said, his voice slightly rougher around the edges than usual, “I’m fine; he didn’t do anything—”

Technoblade snorted. “I don’t know who you’re trying to fool, you’re using me as a crutch —”

No, no, no, Phil was going to find out. Phil was going to pity him. Phil was never going to respect him again, and it would all be over.

Dream's voice echoed in Wilbur's head over and over again, threatening to drown out everything else.

*"Which do you think would hurt Philza more? Loosing another son? Or seeing how easily I broke you."*

"I'm not broken!" Wilbur snapped, his right wing flaring out next to him.

There was a ringing silence at the declaration, and Wilbur felt as though all of the attention in the entire world was directed at him. He couldn't break. He couldn't hunch over. He couldn't hide away. He had to stand tall. He was a prince; he needed to act like one.

"Wilbur—" Phil began.

"Nothing's wrong," Wilbur said, "My wings are fine, I can continue on just fine. What we need to focus on is *Thomas*."

Phil furrowed his brow and opened his mouth in a way that implied he wanted to argue, but Technoblade finally decided to be a good twin and spoke up first.

"I'm currently tracking the man who's taking care of him," he said, showing the red feather that was peeking out of Technoblade's fist, "Schlatt, he said his name was."

Phil's eyes widened. "You've seen him? You've seen Thomas? How is he? Is he okay?"

"No," Wilbur said shortly, and he winced when Phil's face crumbled, "He's the farthest thing from okay, so can we stop standing around and start moving, already? Every moment we waste is another moment for Dream to catch up with them."

Phil nodded shortly, flaring up his wings for flight. "Alright," he said, "Techno, you still have that feather?"

"Yeah," Techno said, "But we can't fly."

"Yes, you can," Wilbur said through gritted teeth.

Techno gave him a look. "You can't fly, and you know it. There's no point in trying to hide it."

Wilbur tried his hardest to ignore Phil's look of confusion, and he glared at Technoblade. Grabbing the nearby tree, he pushed himself off of Techno and leaned against the tree, ignoring his desperate desire to cling to his twin and never let go.

Phil sucked in a loud breath, and Wilbur looked down at the grassy patch beneath him, spotting a bright red ladybug crawling on one of the blades.

"Wil—"

He didn't want to hear Phil's pitying exclamation. He didn't want Phil to hug him. He didn't want Phil to preen him. Wilbur just wanted Phil to find Thomas and make sure that he's safe and happy.

"I'm fine," Wilbur said shortly, "I'm fine. Go find Thomas without me."

"Are you serious?" Techno's voice sounded so incredulous that Wilbur winced. "You really expect me to leave you here after what happened—"

"I'm *fine*, Technoblade." Wilbur looked up from the ground to level both Phil and Technoblade with a scowl, and he grabbed onto the bark of the tree tightly, feeling little pieces of wood and dirt get underneath his fingernails. "Thomas is the one who needs help. I'm weighing you down."

"Go on ahead, Techno," Phil commanded, taking a step closer to Wilbur, "I'll carry Wilbur."

Wilbur pressed himself further against the tree. "*No*. It won't work; I'm too heavy; please, just leave me. I'm fine."

Phil hesitated, and Wilbur was horrified to see his eyes filling with tears. "Wilbur, I just—"

"Your pity is worthless to me," Wilbur said, "Just go on without me."

"No," Phil said, "I'm not losing you. I promise I can carry you, and then we can all see Thomas."

Wilbur really did want to see Tommy again, to be able to hold the boy close and promise that he wouldn't ever have to hurt anyone ever again, to be able to apologize for what he made Tommy do, to be able to start again.

Wilbur slowly felt the knot in his chest begin to loosen as a lump rose in his throat.

"Fine," Wilbur whispered, "But as soon as I'm too much for you, you're putting me down."

Phil nodded, and Wilbur carefully pulled himself up onto his father's back, feeling like a child again.

*"Poor little baby bird."*

Wilbur repressed a shudder. "I would like the record to show that I do not like this," he said.

"Noted," Technoblade grunted, "Alright, let's stop wasting time."

Wilbur couldn't help but to shut his eyes as Phil took off the ground, the strange sensation of wings beating around him feeling so different compared to the feeling of Wilbur's own wings pushing him off of the ground.

And then they were moving, Wilbur's stomach swooping in the way he knew and loved as they dodged the trees in the forest.

They were going to see Tommy again.

## Chapter End Notes

Short chapter but once again i do not care <3

Tommy is in next chapter, stay tuned. <3

Thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments <3



# Chapter 16

## Chapter Summary

4/4 sbi equal family reunion pog.

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, attempted murder, referenced death, panic attack, talk of poison, referenced amputation, referenced torture, implied kidnapping, implied manipulation, referenced stealing and homelessness

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Schlatt, Tommy, and Tubbo had made good distance, considering that they were walking through the woods without a path and without flying.

Guilt surged through Tommy at the reminder of his own weakness. He was slowing everyone down, not being able to soar like everyone else.

Schlatt had assured Tommy that flying would make it easier for Dre-his father to find them, and that Tubbo would have a hard time keeping up anyway. Flying for long distances was apparently very strenuous.

Tommy suddenly remembered how Sam's agony seemed to double when he had launched into the air on that night, and he wondered if Sam hadn't flown in a long time, or if his injury was what had caused him to crash to the ground so quickly.

Tommy decided it wouldn't go good to dwell on it; thinking about Sam still hurt so much that it felt like a small beast was tearing Tommy's chest up from the inside out.

It wasn't exactly a pleasant feeling.

Anyway, Schlatt had seemed happy with their progress, if the way he kept smiling and glancing at the sun had any indication.

Or maybe Schlatt was just stupid.

The walk was somewhat silence, although Tubbo kept talking about meaningless stuff. Every time he saw a new plant, he'd point it out and try to name it.

“Oh, I don’t know this one,” Tubbo said, frowning at a plant. Tommy was standing somewhat behind Tubbo, so he couldn’t exactly get a good look at it. Tubbo turned to Schlatt, who hadn’t stopped walking like they had. “Dad, do you know?”

Schlatt turned around and looked at the plant, shaking his head. “No,” he said, “sorry, kiddo, but we really need to keep moving.”

Tubbo nodded, and Schlatt gently led him away from the plant, allowing Tommy to get a good view of it.

It was a plant with small little purple flowers with very round, black berries growing from them. Tommy recognized it almost immediately, and the idea that he could finally give some useful input filled his entire body with aching relief.

“It’s deadly nightshade,” he said, leaving the plant to follow Schlatt and Tubbo again.

Schlatt gave Tommy a shocked look, and Tommy flinched.

“Wait, what?” he asked.

Tommy frowned, suddenly much more self-conscious of himself. Maybe he had said the wrong thing?

“That plant,” he said, his words still less than eloquent, “It’s deadly nightshade.”

“Oh,” Tubbo said, sounding far less concerned than Schlatt, which made Tommy relax marginally. “That’s a strange name for a flower.”

“It can kill people,” Tommy explained, “Especially the roots.”

Schlatt made a choking sound, and Tommy instinctively reached out for his cloak for comfort.

Nothing was there.

Tommy had left the cloak at the camp. He had left the cloak at the camp with Wilbur. He had left *Wilbur*.

Tommy’s heart rate was picking up again, and it was everything he had to just keep breathing, because now he didn’t have his cloak, and if he didn’t have his cloak, then how was he supposed to protect himself and hide his wings, and if he couldn’t hide his wings, how was he supposed to go into towns without being hurt, and if he couldn’t go into towns, how was Schlatt supposed to help him, and he was already slowing everyone down and Wilbur—

“Tommy?” Tubbo asked, “What’s wrong?”

Tommy jerked his head up toward Tubbo, trying to open and close his mouth and force out the words, but the only thing he could manage was a pained gasp.

“Oh.” Tubbo glanced at Schlatt, who was already bending down in front of Tommy, his face looking that way he did whenever Tommy did something like this.

Tommy was beginning to hate it, if he was being perfectly honest.

Still, when Schlatt instructed Tommy to take deep breaths, he obeyed, and suddenly Tubbo was hugging him.

Sam used to hug him when it got hard for him to breathe.

Tommy pulled himself away from Tubbo instantly, and Tubbo immediately backed away.

“Sorry,” Tubbo said quickly.

Tommy looked down at his feet. “Sorry,” he echoed back, “Just...”

“Don’t hug you without permission,” Tubbo finished for him, “Got it.”

Tommy nodded, wrapping his own arms around himself and wishing that he still had his cloak. It seemed strange that he would miss such a bothersome article of clothing, but it was the only thing he had in his time on his own, and it was protection. Now, Tommy felt naked with all of his feathers just visible to the naked eye, ready for anyone to see and *fear*.

His father always said that Tommy was meant to be something to be feared.

But Sam had never feared him. Schlatt hadn’t feared him. Tubbo hadn’t feared him. Wilbur hadn’t feared him.

Tommy wasn’t sure what to think anymore. He never was.

Schlatt was still looking worried, and Tommy found himself scowling. “Stop looking at me like that,” he snapped.

He instantly clamped his mouth shut, horrified at his own rudeness.

Schlatt however, simply nodded and stood back up, his face clearing slightly. “Are you worried about anything?” Schlatt asked instead.

Tommy hesitated. Would he sound needy if he asked for a cloak? Schlatt had already given up so much on Tommy’s behalf, and the last thing he needed was Schlatt dying because Tommy couldn’t be self-sufficient enough for a cloak. Besides, it was just a cloak, and Tommy could always just sneak away from Tubbo and Schlatt’s camp if he was really so worried about endangering them. Except... Tommy said that he would go with them, and what would happen if Tommy went back on that promise?

Tommy was thinking too hard again, and Schlatt was still looking at him, waiting for an answer.

“My cloak,” Tommy managed to get out, “I, um, I don’t have it anymore, which is fine. I just, it feels weird without it.”

Schlatt nodded. "I get that," he said, "I'll get you a cloak at the nearest town, okay?"

Tommy shook his head quickly. "I don't want you to waste your money on that," he said, "It's okay, I'm sure there are some travelers with a cloak, I can just take it from them."

"Oh," Tubbo said, frowning slightly, "Is that where you got your first cloak?"

Tommy nodded. "I, um, I knew that I had to keep my wings hidden, so I saw some people with a cloak and I stole it while they were asleep." He kicked the ground slightly, suddenly aware of the fact that stealing was against the law. "I, um, sorry."

To Tommy's surprise *again*, nobody looked angry at the admission. Schlatt was even wearing that stupid smile again, like he was almost proud of Tommy for stealing from someone who might've needed the cloak.

"We all do what we have to do to survive," Schlatt said, "It wasn't like you hurt anyone, and from what I've seen, you're trying to make an honest living, although I wouldn't blame you if you started stealing food or money."

Tommy let his dark wings curl around himself slightly, and he tried not to think about what he had used those black feathers for in the past.

"I didn't like stealing," Tommy muttered, "It felt wrong."

"It's not ideal," Schlatt agreed, "But like I said, we all do what we need to do to survive."

Tommy was glad that he had decided to find traveling traders and the occasional gang to get small jobs with for money. It saved him the dilemma of trying to steal and then feeling like the food he ate was entirely unearned after the act was done, and with the small jobs, Tommy actually managed to learn some good skills which helped him with other jobs he got in the future.

"Anyway," Schlatt said as they continued to walk through the forest, "With any luck, we'll reach the capital tomorrow or the day after."

That sounded like it was good news, although Tommy couldn't deny that there was a knot of dread at the idea. King Philza lived in the capital, after all, and what if he tried to find Tommy? What was Tommy going to do then?

Tommy held back a shiver. His father had told him stories about the king. Tommy would much rather not meet him at all.

"Will Puffy be there?" Tubbo asked.

Schlatt sighed and ruffled Tubbo's hair. "I hope so, kiddo."

The name Puffy sounded familiar to Tommy, although he couldn't quite place where he had heard it before. Maybe Schlatt and Tubbo had brought it up?

And then Tommy suddenly heard the sound of wings approaching, and he spun around, hoping against hope that they weren't neon green, that they were the same golden hue of Wilbur's wings, that Wilbur was alive and well and the screaming had only ever been his imagination—

And there he was, holding onto someone else with large gray wings and being led by the pink-winged man from earlier.

And before Tommy could get a better hold of his emotions, before Tommy thought to try and hide his wings from the stranger carrying Wilbur, he was already sprinting toward him.

“Wilbur!”

And Wilbur was sliding off of the man, stumbling strangely as he took a few steps toward Tommy, and it wasn't until Tommy was right in front of Wilbur that he saw.

Wilbur's wings weren't both there. His golden feathers weren't cleanly aligned.

Instead, only one wing remained, and Tommy could see patches where feathers had been clearly ripped out. Blood was spattered all over Wilbur's clothes.

*“It's simple, Thomas,”* his father's voice whispered in his mind, *“Simply grab the feathers and pull.”*

Tommy felt as though a rope were squeezing tightly around his lungs, but he forced himself to speak anyway.

“Wilbur, you-he-I—”

Wilbur was leaning against a tree now, somehow smiling even though he was missing an entire *wing*.

“It's okay,” he said softly, “I'm fine, see?”

“But you're not,” Tommy whispered, “You're hurt, and I—”

“No,” Wilbur interrupted, his voice hard, “This isn't your fault, okay? None of this is your fault.”

The stranger, the one with gray wings and blond hair tied into a small ponytail, was staring at Tommy strangely, and Tommy's eyes flicked over to him when he whispered, “Oh prime.”

Wilbur noticed his switching attention, and he smiled again, gesturing to the stranger.

“Tommy,” he said, “This is my father.”

Wilbur's father's face was strangely kind, and there was no anger directed at Tommy, despite the fact that Tommy's black wings were as clear as day, contrasting darkly with the green of the thinning forest.

“And that’s Technoblade,” Wilbur said, pointing to the one with pink wings that Tommy had met earlier, “And... well...” Wilbur took a deep breath, like he was afraid to say something. “Tommy, I should’ve told you this earlier, but... you’re our little brother.”

The words took a few moments to process.

*You’re our little brother. You’re our little brother. You’re our little brother.*

But... but that didn’t make any sense. Tommy didn’t *have* siblings. Tommy was an only child. And besides, this man wasn’t his father, Tommy had a completely different father.

And hadn’t Wilbur said that his baby brother was dead?

Tommy wasn’t dead. He was alive. He was living and breathing even though some days he wondered if it wouldn’t be better for everyone if he just took one of his feathers and hope that maybe it would actually work against himself.

But he didn’t. He was too much of a coward for that.

“I—what?” Tommy whispered, stumbling backwards, “But, but that’s not possible, I—”

Wilbur’s father looked strangely sad, and he took a step toward Tommy, his wings fluffing up slightly. “Thomas—”

*“Don’t you love me, Thomas.” “Kill them.” “It’s simple, Thomas.” “Killing is in your nature, Thomas.”*

“Don’t call me that!” Tommy shouted, trying to get his father’s voice out of his head and only managing to bump into Tubbo as he frantically tried to step away, “I’m not Thomas; I’m Tommy, who told you—”

“You’re my son,” Wilbur’s father said, his voice tense in a way that Tommy couldn’t understand, “I was there when your mother named you.”

“No,” Tommy said as Tubbo grabbed Tommy’s hand, and Tommy squeezed onto it tightly, praying to prime that the touch wasn’t going to hurt him. “No, that’s not what happened.”

Tommy killed his mother. His father named him.

“Sorry, kid,” Technoblade said, who was slightly farther away from Tommy, “But Dream was lying to you.”

The world was spinning, and someone was resting their hands against his shoulders, grounding him somewhat amidst the confused terror. Tommy forced himself to take deep breaths and looked up to find Schlatt squeezing his shoulder gently, his wings shielding him slightly from the others.

“Tommy, kid, it’s going to be alright,” Schlatt said, “Keep taking deep breaths, okay?”

Tommy could do that. He continued to take in large gulps of air, trying not to think about how tilted the world had suddenly become.

But it made sense... just a little. Wilbur had said that his little brother had blonde hair, blue eyes, and black wings like Tommy.

And... and they had known his proper name.

Tommy hadn't told *anybody* his proper name.

But his father had. His father had said it when he told Thomas to choose between his best friend and a prince of the Antarctic empire—

*Prince.*

Oh. Oh no. Tommy had forgotten about that. How could he have possibly forgotten about that? How could Tommy let his worry for Wilbur to make him fully forget the truth about Wilbur's identity?

Wilbur wasn't just some traveler. He was a prince; he was the prince of the Antarctic Empire.

Wilbur's father wasn't just some kind guy. He was *King Philza*.

"No," Tommy whispered, "No, no, no."

What did he do? What *could* he do? It was only a matter of time before Philza took Tommy by force and locked him up, having Tommy tortured or executed. He might even have his wings ripped off, and *prime*, Tommy would probably deserve it after everything he'd done to Wilbur, but his father had always said to do one of two things when confronted by the king.

*"If you ever meet him, Thomas,"* his father had said, his fingers running through Tommy's hair in that way that Tommy always loved, *"Either run as far as you can, or if you can't do that, go for the kill."*

Tommy couldn't run. He was too outnumbered.

But there was one thing that Tommy could do.

There were probably better ways to do this; there were probably much wiser ways to go about trying to kill the most powerful person in the entire kingdom.

But Tommy wasn't thinking clearly. His mind was still a rush of confusion. King Philza thought that *Tommy* was his son. Wilbur was the prince. Tommy's father might not be his father, which just couldn't be true. It couldn't be.

With an angry shout, Tommy rushed toward Phil, taking one of his own black feathers and crushing it in his hand.

Behind him, he could hear Schlatt call after him, telling him to stop, but Tommy wouldn't stop. He wasn't going to be taken captive or worse. He wasn't about to allow Tubbo to be

taken captive or killed all just to keep Tommy in line.

Hopefully, Wilbur would forgive him.

If not, Tommy would understand. It was probably for the best that Wilbur and Tommy didn't interact anyway.

His father had always warned him that anyone in the royal family was dangerous. Tommy might as well cut off any potential attachments before they went too far.

Technoblade was also shouting, trying to run toward Philza to protect him for some stupid reason, but Philza held out a hand to stop him, as though he *wanted* Tommy to end it all.

Tommy's feet hit the ground at the same speed as his heart, and he wished he could shut his eyes but knew he couldn't as he reached his hand out to touch Philza.

Tommy hated how stupidly easy it was for him to just cut people's lives off, just like that.

But right now, he was just grateful that he had some semblance of an advantage on him.

Tommy had his fingers inches away from Philza's bare hand when Philza suddenly brought his other hand up and grabbed Tommy's wrist suddenly, stopping Tommy from actually touching his skin with his magical fingertips.

Tommy froze. Philza's hold on his hand wasn't tight, and it didn't cut off any blood flow, but Tommy knew it hardly mattered. This was the end. Tommy had one job, and he couldn't even do that.

He was a weapon created to kill, but when killing actually *mattered*, when he actually was going to do some good out of it, he couldn't even succeed.

No. *No*. Tommy couldn't fail; he refused to fail; he had to *do this*.

With all his might, Tommy tried to yank his hand out of Philza's grip, twisting it around and doing every single trick that his father had ever tried to teach him.

But Philza was too strong, as though he knew exactly what Tommy was going to try, as though Tommy were too small and insignificant to possibly stand a chance against him.

Tommy suddenly understood why his father had always wanted him to run instead of engage if the time ever came that Tommy was forced to fight Philza.

Philza crouched down and picked a piece of a nightshade plant, which was apparently plentiful in the area, and he moved the plant so that the smooth leaf would brush against Tommy's fingertips.

The flower dissolved into dust, and Tommy's ability to kill Philza was gone.

There was nothing he could do.



Tommy couldn't stop the terrified sob that burst from him, and he started kicking and punching and even *biting*, anything to get away from Philza, to be able to run the hell *away from this place*.

"I'm not going to hurt you," Philza said quietly, neither tightening nor loosening his grip on Tommy's wrists even after Tommy bit his hand, "I'd never hurt you."

"Stop *lying!*" Tommy shouted.

Why was no one coming to help him? Why was Schlatt just standing here, like nothing was wrong?

Schlatt probably didn't want to endanger Tubbo, who looked as though he wanted to join Tommy in the beating up Philza department. As a matter of fact, Schlatt seemed to be actively holding him back from doing anything stupid.

"He's not lying," Wilbur said softly, and Tommy didn't even want to look at him. Wilbur was the prince; of course, he'd take Philza's side.

Did Wilbur even care about Tommy? Or did he hate Tommy for what happened to his wing? And was that whole thing about Tommy being their long-lost brother a joke or something?

Tommy hoped it was a joke. Tommy hoped it was a fabricated lie just to get Tommy to let his guard down. Because if it were true... well, what was Tommy supposed to do with himself?

"Let go of me!"

To Tommy's astonishment, Philza let go, although his hands were still hovering close to Tommy's wrists.

Philza would stop Tommy from trying to kill him again.

But maybe he wouldn't stop Tommy if he tried to run.

Tommy slowly stood up, not looking Philza in the eyes and instead focusing on his shoulder, not at all surprised to see that his outfit had golden thread lining it.

Philza didn't try to grab him again. He didn't even try to say anything.

Tommy took a hesitant step back, his foot crunching against the leaves.

Philza still didn't say anything, and Tommy's eyes flicked back to his face, trying to gage for a reaction, but Philza's face was completely unreadable, his eyes hard and his mouth set into a thin line. He almost looked angry.

Tommy couldn't stay here.

And so, without wasting another moment, Tommy spun around and sprinted away, pushing past Schlatt and grabbing Tubbo's hand as he dragged his friend safely away from the heartless king, safely away from all the confusion and pain.

And maybe everything would be okay.

## Chapter End Notes

Look, you got your reunion!

Don't worry they won't stay separated tommy just panicked lol.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments. <3

# Chapter 17

## Chapter Summary

Tommy tries to run away.

oh look it's a wild dream everybody say hi

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced murder, referenced manipulation, self-hatred

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy ran as quickly as he could, his lungs heaving as he held on tightly to Tubbo's hand.

He could see the edge of the forest, a grassy valley just beyond the thinning trees.

And then, at the top of the hill, Tommy's foot snagged on a root, and they both came tumbling down the grassy slope.

Tommy and Tubbo landed at the bottom of the hill in a tangled pile, and Tommy was quick to extract himself from Tubbo, dusting off any grass that might have gotten on him. But they really needed to keep running, Tommy couldn't afford to waste any time, so he reached out to grab Tubbo's hand again.

But Tubbo grabbed onto his shirt first.

"Wait," Tubbo huffed, his voice breathless as he stood up and leaned forward, inhaling air heavily, "Wait."

But they *couldn't* wait. Even now, Tommy saw Philza's silhouette at the top of the hill, joined by Schlatt. Was Schlatt working with Philza? Was Philza forcing Schlatt to do things?

Tommy didn't know. All he knew was that he and Tubbo weren't safe, and that they couldn't afford to stop and wait around just because they were tired.

"Tubbo, we need to go!" Tommy exclaimed, his voice cracking, "Tubbo—"

"Tommy," Tubbo said quietly, "I don't think Emperor Philza is going to hurt you."

Tommy flinched back at the casual use of the feared emperor's name. "He is," Tommy insisted, "See, look, he's chasing..."

Tommy trailed off, noticing that Philza wasn't actually flying down toward them, instead standing at the top of the hill like a predator might watch their prey. Was Philza really so confident in his ability to find Tommy that he wasn't even going to take this opportunity to scoop Tommy up right this second?

Tommy hands shook harder than ever, and he tugged at Tubbo desperately. "Come on, we have to go—"

"Tommy, listen," Tubbo said calmly, also looking up at Philza, except his face made it seem like there wasn't anything terrifying about him at all, "You trust Wilbur, don't you?"

Tommy hesitated. Did he? Wilbur was... nice, but Tommy had no idea if that was real or not. Maybe it was all a game, maybe it was all manipulation, maybe Tommy was a tool to him as much as he was a tool to his father.

But no, his father had loved him; he had warned him about Philza; it was Tommy's own fault that he was being rebellious and running away.

His father had also made him kill people. Tommy had killed more people than Emperor Philza probably ever had.

Wilbur hadn't blamed him. Wilbur had hugged him like Sam used to.

"I don't know," Tommy finally whispered.

Philza still hadn't flown over to them. He had barely moved. He was just watching, like that big bird Tommy had once seen—a hawk, Tommy was pretty sure it was called.

Tubbo was making a weird face, looking like he was thinking very hard. "Well... he saved my life, didn't he?" Tubbo asked, "So doesn't that make him trustworthy?"

That was a good point. Wilbur did save Tubbo's life, even offering himself up to die.

Tommy tried to shut his eyes against the memory of Wilbur collapsing to the ground, looking as dead as everyone else Tommy had ever killed, but that only made the image clearer.

"I... I..." Tommy hesitated, "But that doesn't mean that Philza's good. He's probably going to try to kill you and imprison me and I don't want you to get hurt."

"I don't want you to get hurt either," Tubbo agreed, "But Philza didn't hurt you that entire time, even while you were kicking him and biting him. So... I don't think he's bad?"

Tubbo didn't understand. Philza was dangerous. He was probably trying to get Tommy to like him so that Tommy wouldn't struggle.

"He is bad," Tommy insisted, "And if we don't leave now, he'll catch up to us."

“But he’s been watching the conversation this entire time and hasn’t done anything,” Tubbo pointed out, pointing over to Philza, who was indeed still standing on the top of that hill with Schlatt.

Tommy could see Wilbur and Technoblade come into view, and his stomach twisted when he remembered what his father had done to Wilbur’s wings.

It was Tommy’s fault, but Wilbur didn’t seem to think it was.

Maybe... maybe he could trust them? Wilbur trusted Phil, and his father had been... well not *wrong*, Tommy’s father was never wrong.

There was no way Tommy was going to be able to outrun Philza, not when he was *right there* and actually able to fly. It was ridiculous for Tommy to try in the first place, but he hadn’t known what to do.

Maybe... maybe it would be better to go along with him. And then, while they were sleeping, Tommy could take the opportunity to end Philza once and for all.

It was just another kill. Just the simple crushing of a feather and a touch of the skin. Tommy had done it hundreds of times before. It wouldn’t kill him to do it one last time.

Though it would definitely kill Phil.

“Fine,” Tommy muttered.

Tubbo smiled, flexing his wings slightly, his feathers blending in with the green grass beneath their feet. “Great!”

Tubbo grabbed Tommy’s hand and entwined his fingers between Tommy’s own. He began leading Tommy back up the hill.

Tommy’s wings began shaking more and more the closer they got to Philza, and he forced himself not to hide behind Tubbo’s wings. Tommy was a big man. He was more equipped to protect Tubbo from Philza than Tubbo was to protect Tommy.

Besides, Tommy didn’t want anyone else to get hurt on his behalf.

So, Tommy pushed himself in front of Tubbo, still gripping onto Tubbo’s hand almost as tightly as he had held onto Sam the day he died.

Philza was tall. His gray wings were huge, casting a shadow on both Tommy and Tubbo as they stood in front of him. Even standing as tall as he was, Tommy had to tilt his head up slightly to look at him.

He was terrifying.

“I’m not your son,” Tommy began, his voice shaking. Would Philza try to kill him for defying what he already said was true? Was Tommy making a huge mistake?

But Tommy already had a father, and he wasn't going to allow Emperor Philza to think that Tommy was related to him in any way.

Philza's face was perfectly smooth, as though he were intentionally hiding whatever emotion he was feeling. It was probably anger. Disapproval. Hate. Disgust.

"Alright," Philza said.

Tommy blinked. He hadn't expected that reaction. He had expected more resistance.

Glancing over to where Wilbur was leaning against Technoblade, he saw that Wilbur's face was filled with pain. Tommy knew the look. It was almost desperation mixed with pure heartbreak.

Tommy had seen a few people with that look before he killed them.

It hurt to see Wilbur wear the same expression.

"I'm just going with you because Tubbo thinks it will be safer," Tommy said. He took a deep breath and glared at Philza with as much hatred as he dared. "But if you do one thing to hurt him, I will kill you."

Philza nodded. "Of course, mate."

Tommy raised his wings defensively. What was Philza playing at? He should at the very least telling Tommy not to threaten him. Why was Philza acting like it wasn't a big deal that Tommy had just threatened Philza's life mere moments after actually attempting to kill him.

It didn't particularly matter, of course. Tommy was going to kill Philza anyway, but Philza didn't know that.

Schlatt glanced around, his own wings raised like he was ready to push off the ground and flee at any moment.

"Well, we should probably get moving again," Schlatt said, his voice tight.

Schlatt's face relaxed slightly when he looked over to Tommy, who still hadn't quite recovered from the fact that he was standing in front of Emperor Philza of the Antarctic Empire and wasn't dead.

"Are you doing alright, kid?" Schlatt asked.

Tommy stared flatly at Schlatt. He was on Philza's side from the looks of it, which Tommy couldn't even begin to comprehend. But if Schlatt was supporting Philza, could Tommy really trust Schlatt?

Well, Tommy still trusted Tubbo, but it felt different, somehow.

"I'm fine," Tommy said shortly, squeezing Tubbo's hand.

Tubbo squeezed back. “It’s okay, Dad,” he said quietly.

Schlatt’s wings sagged slightly, and Tommy himself was relaxing at the sound of Tubbo’s voice.

“Schlatt’s right,” Technoblade said, “We really should keep moving.”

Tommy sighed but nodded. There was really no point in arguing anyway.

Meanwhile, a man spotted the towering palace of the capital city in the horizon. They were exactly as he remembered them, with tall towers that made for perfect balconies to launch to the air from.

He would be there soon. Soon, he would enter through the city gates, and none would be any the wiser of his presence.

“Oh, Philza,” he whispered, landing on the road and tucking his neon-green wings behind his cloak, “You old fool.”

Well, Philza did come from a long line of fools. That’s really what made him so... difficult, to say the least.

But all that was about to change.

Maybe then Dream could finally accomplish what he’d been spending centuries dreaming of.

## Chapter End Notes

Short chapter sadge.

But i legit have to go to bed in fifteen minutes so rip.

Anyway, thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments.  
<333333

# Chapter 18

## Chapter Summary

Tommy is sad and Philza is mad.

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced character death, referenced torture, ptsd, grief, tears, self-loathing, guilt, referenced murder

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There were many emotions that ran through Phil's head when he saw Thomas for the first time in eleven years.

But it was safe to say that unadulterated fury was one of them.

Not toward Tommy, never toward Tommy. The only feelings he could possibly have toward Tommy was unconditional love and bone-aching sorrow at the way Tommy tried to flee, at the way he tried to kill Phil, looking so terrified for his life that it made Phil want to pull him into a hug and never let go.

He almost did, but Phil knew it would have probably done more harm than good, so he restrained himself.

But his fury could not be forgotten, and Phil would think it was very obvious of who Phil's fury was aimed at.

*Dream.*

It was bad enough that Dream seemed to have a personal vendetta against Phil and his family. It was bad enough that Dream had *kidnapped* his child.

But no, Dream couldn't just satisfy himself with taking Thomas and traumatizing Techno.

Instead, he had to put Tommy through years of torment, turning him into the broken boy that Phil saw before him.

And that wasn't even *mentioning* what Dream did to Wilbur.



Phil was a father. No matter how much Wilbur tried to insist he was fine, that it was Thomas they had to worry about, that Thomas had gone through so much worse, Phil knew that Wilbur was the opposite of fine. Honestly, you didn't even have to be a father for that. Anyone could see that Wilbur was not okay.

Phil just wished Wilbur could bring himself to admit it.

So yeah, Phil was furious. He wanted nothing more than to find Dream and slice his head clean off, but even that would be too merciful. Maybe he would yank all of Dream's feathers out, and then chop off his wings, and then—

"Your majesty," Schlatt said from beside him, "Please calm yourself."

Phil frowned, glancing at Schlatt in confusion before realizing that Tommy was staring at him with terrified eyes.

Phil cursed himself internally; his anger at Dream must've showed, which Tommy, of course, was only going to translate as Phil being more of a danger toward him and his friend.

They were currently sitting around the campfire, done with a long day of travel.

Phil had to hand it to Schlatt. The man was pretty smart. Staying off the beaten path so that Dream would have a harder time of finding them was certainly a good move, and while it would make the journey marginally longer, it at least ensured that they might actually make it to the capital without difficulty.

Then again, Phil wasn't sure what Dream planned on doing while *Phil* was with the group.

After all, Phil was probably the few who actually managed to win a one on one confrontation with Dream, even if the monster got away after.

But there was no point in reminiscing over that.

"Sorry." Phil tried to calm his expression, but he wasn't sure how successful he was. He flashed a soft smile toward Tommy, but that only succeeded in making the boy lean further into Tubbo, as though together they could survive Phil's 'wrath'.

It was getting harder to not fly straight out of the camp and hunt Dream down himself.

Wilbur was already asleep, put under bedrest by Phil himself. Wilbur insisted he was fine, but everyone could tell how emotionally drained he was, so he eventually agreed to lie down with a blanket. He fell asleep five minutes later, leaning against Technoblade.

Techno didn't bother to pretend to be annoyed, instead opting to fall asleep on top of him as well.

Phil hoped that they managed to sleep through the night, but some how he doubted it.

It was somewhat amusing that Tommy and Tubbo were still awake, though, considering that they were a solid eight years younger than the teens.

Or it *would* be amusing, if it weren't for the fact that Tommy was still staring at Phil, his eyes wide and *terrified*. What was going on through his head? Did he think that Phil would try to kill them all when they were asleep? Was he trying to think of some way to escape? What had Dream even *told* him?

"I'm not going to hurt you," Phil tried for probably the fiftieth time that day.

Tommy didn't look convinced, not saying anything as he wrapped his wing around Tubbo protectively. Tubbo did the same thing in turn, although he flashed an apologetic smile toward Phil.

"Alright boys," Schlatt said, soft authority in his tone, "You two should at least *try* to get some sleep."

"I'm not tired," Tommy said instantly.

At that moment, Tubbo yawned.

A few moments later, Tommy himself was suppressing a yawn.

"Yeah, you two are definitely not tired," Schlatt repeated, sounding a bit like Phil whenever Techno and Wilbur were up to no good, "Well, *I* am going to go to sleep, and you two are going to *pretend* you're going to sleep. Phil can keep watch for us."

Tommy's feathers instantly fluffed up at that. "Can I keep watch?" he asked instantly, "Please, I promise I'll be good, I just—"

Phil would really rather not have his eleven-year-old son keep watch, but it wasn't exactly hard to figure out *why* Tommy was so reluctant to let Phil be on guard duty.

"Okay, what if *I* keep watch?" Schlatt offered, "Would that make you feel better?"

Tommy's wings relaxed slightly, and Phil had to squash down the feeling of jealousy that came with it. It didn't matter that Tommy trusted Schlatt more than him, what mattered was that Tommy trusted *somebody* at all.

The logic only sort of worked, but that was good enough for Phil, and he nodded calmly.

"That sounds fine to me," he said, "Wake me up if anything happens?"

"Of course," Schlatt said, "It'd be pretty stupid of me not to."

Tommy still looked nervous, but Tubbo guided him to a pile of leaves, and they made a very feeble nest, wrapping their wings around each other and closing their eyes.

It was very cute, regardless of the circumstances.

With a small sigh, Phil leaned against a tree, ready to close his eyes and get a very, very light sleep.

Tommy didn't sleep.

He was waiting for his moment to strike.

Schlatt was keeping watch, which would make Tommy's plan trickier, but it was better than if Phil was awake, because then Tommy's plan would have been impossible.

Tommy could be sneaky. Tommy was trained to be sneaky. Tommy knew how to stay out of Schlatt's sight while he made sure that nobody came to attack them or something.

Unfortunately, Schlatt seemed to be keeping a very sharp eye on Tommy and Tubbo. Every time Tommy opened his eyes to see if he was far away, Schlatt was still staring at them.

Tommy knew that Schlatt was probably worried about Tubbo, but it still sent chills down his spine. He just wanted to kill Phil, was that really too much to ask?

Tommy's eyelids were getting heavier. It was getting harder and harder to stay awake, especially with the warmth radiating off of Tubbo's body like a blanket. Tommy had to stay awake.

When Tommy next opened his eyes, the sun was peeking out from behind the trees, and Tommy could see someone coming toward him.

At first, the light was too much and Tommy could barely see more than a blurred figure walking toward him. However, as his eyes adjusted, Tommy could make out familiar dark green wings and those warm eyes, and that *smile*—

"Sam," Tommy whispered, already pushing himself to his feet, "Sam!"

The back of Tommy's throat burned as he sprinted toward Sam, his vision blurring with tears.

Sam spread his arms wide, and Tommy leapt into them, clinging onto Sam with no intention of letting go.

Sam hugged Tommy closer to his chest than Tommy had ever felt him do before, even closer than when he... when he died.

"Sam," Tommy whispered, burying his face into Sam's chest as sobs began ripping through Tommy's body, "Sam."

"Tommy," Sam whispered, combing his fingers through Tommy's hair, "It's alright. It's alright, baby. I'm here."

Tommy clung onto Sam's shirt, twisting it into his fist as he pressed his ear against Sam's chest, making sure his heart was still beating.

"I thought—I thought you were dead," Tommy whispered, choking on his own tears, "I saw you die!"

“I know,” Sam whispered, rocking Tommy back and forth.

“You left me!” Tommy screamed, “You said you wouldn’t leave me!”

“I know.”

“Please,” Tommy whispered as Sam rubbed circles into Tommy’s back, “Please don’t leave me again.”

There was a small silence.

“I’m so sorry.”

Tommy looked up at Sam, shock electrifying his system. What did that mean? What did *he mean by that?*

“Sam?” Tommy whispered, clinging onto him, “What do you mean?”

Tears were running down Sam’s face now, and he gently brushed Tommy’s own tears away with his thumb. “I’m so sorry,” Sam whispered, “But I’m still dead.”

Their surroundings were still as bright and sunny as the purest of days, but Tommy couldn’t feel any of it. It was as though Sam had plunged him into the gaping abyss, and there was nothing left but death and sorrow.

“But you’re right here,” Tommy whispered, “Sam, you’re right here.”

Sam smiled sadly. “My final request—” He spoke in the softest whisper, but Tommy could still hear it clear as the day surrounding them. “—was to see you again.”

Tommy swallowed. “I don’t understand.”

“It’s alright, Tommy,” Sam said softly, “It’s going to be alright.”

“No, it’s *not*,” Tommy gasped, “You’re dead, you were supposed to stay, Sam, why can’t you stay?” Tommy’s sobs were getting worse, and he lost his grip on Sam’s shirt, collapsing onto his knees. “*Please.*”

Sam got down onto his own knees, cradling Tommy’s face in his hands. Tommy didn’t say anything as he was forced to stare into Sam’s green eyes, which seemed so much brighter and fuller than Tommy had ever seen them be before.

“Listen to me,” Sam said gently, “It’s not your fault.”

“Yes, it is!” Tommy screamed, “I could’ve saved you, I should’ve been *good*—”

Sam shushed Tommy quietly as Tommy’s sobs made it harder for him to breathe. “Repeat after me, baby, can you do that?” Sam asked.

Tommy would do anything for Sam, anything to get him to stay.

“Great.” Sam took a deep breath. “It’s not my fault.”

Tommy followed Sam’s lead. “It’s not my fault.”

“I am a good person.”

Tommy hesitated. That... that wasn’t true though. Tommy wasn’t a good person.

Tommy shook his head, sobbing all the harder.

“Tommy,” Sam said gently, “Say it with me: I am a good person.”

“I can’t,” Tommy whispered before raising his voice, “I can’t, I can’t!”

“Okay.” Sam brought Tommy into a hug again, gently preening Tommy’s feathers. “I’ll do it for you then.”

Tommy sobbed and shook his head as Sam gently rocked him back and forth.

“You are a good person,” Sam whispered, “You are a good person forced to do bad things, but that doesn’t make you any less a victim to the person who did this to you.”

“But—”

“You are not to blame for my being stabbed through the stomach,” Sam continued, raising his voice slightly louder, “You are a good person, Tommy, and this isn’t your fault.”

Tommy continued shaking his head, his sobbing making his throat sore. “You’re wrong.”

Sam carded his fingers through Tommy’s hair, and Tommy only sobbed all the harder. “It’s okay,” Sam whispered, “You’ll understand one day.”

Tommy didn’t understand, and he would *never* understand. Sam was wrong about this, plain and simple.

“I’m running out of time,” Sam said quietly, and Tommy felt as though someone had physically tugged at his heart, “Can you trust me on this one thing Tommy?”

Tommy swallowed, but he managed to nod, looking up at Sam with puffy eyes.

“Trust Phil,” Sam said, “I know you don’t trust him, but try. *Please.*”

“But he’s dangerous,” Tommy protested weakly.

“He *loves you*, Tommy,” Sam emphasized, “He loves you more than you could possibly comprehend, and he would never hurt you.”

Tommy didn’t believe it, but... he had promised to trust Sam.

“I’ll—I’ll try,” Tommy whispered. He looked up pleadingly at Sam, who seemed like he was glowing again. “Please, please don’t leave me.”

“We’ll see each other again,” Sam promised, pressing a kiss on Tommy’s hair, “Hopefully not for many years.”

“No, no, no!” Tommy hugged Sam’s neck, as if that would stop him from returning to the beyond.

Sam couldn’t leave him, he had already left once and it was too much, please, Sam couldn’t leave him, please, please, please—

“I love you, Tommy.” Sam smiled, “It’s going to be okay.”

“Sam!”

Tommy blinked, and the sky was dark again, Tubbo’s face hovering over him.

“Tommy?” Tubbo whispered.

Tommy opened his mouth, but instead he burst into tears.

## Chapter End Notes

Welp

Yes this fic has a happy ending.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments. <3

# Sam Interlude

## Chapter Summary

Dream does a thing.

But there's a larger story behind that.

## Chapter Notes

Tw: child abuse, kidnapping, self sacrifice, abuse, manipulation, claustrophobia, chains, physical abuse, emotional abuse, torture, death, murder, blood, explosions, isolation, self-blame, self-loathing, grief, crying

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sam's father was a potion maker.

Sam wasn't sure why he had always considered that the most important detail of his life. There were certainly many other events that had taken place in his hellhole of a life, or else it couldn't exactly be defined as a hellhole.

He remembered being five years old and standing in the kitchen, his bare feet cold against the stone tile. His father was baking a cake, he was pretty sure, although Sam couldn't recall what type of cake it was.

Sam *did* remember his father turning around to see Sam staring at him, and he had given Sam a warm smile, beckoning him closer. Sam had quickly toddled up to him, his wings flapping slightly behind him, as though that could help propel him forward.

Sam's dad had scooped Sam up in his arms. "Do you want to help, little chick?" he had asked.

Sam was a quiet child, so he had only nodded, making a small noise of confirmation.

His dad had let Sam put in some of the easier ingredients, and Sam had helped a little bit with the stirring, although in hindsight, Sam knew full well that his father had done most of the work. Still, it was nice to watch the batter become one cohesive whole, and when they put the cake in the oven, Sam could hardly keep still in his excitement for the finished dessert, even though they would have to wait for it to cool before icing and eating it.

Potions were not that simple.

For one, they were very illegal, and for good reason. Nobody in history had managed to successfully harness feathers through potions or any sort of weapon, and most attempts ended in catastrophic failure. Many famous researchers who had been rumored to get close to a breakthrough had died in an experiment gone wrong.

So yeah, there was a reason that potion making was very, very illegal, and not to be messed with. Anyone found experimenting with feathers were going to get fined at best, and arrested at worst.

However, Sam's father was *good* at hiding his work.

They lived in the capital, and their house had an underground bunker, one that was probably created during one of the great wars. Sam didn't know that for sure, it could've easily just been created to hide illegal junk, but the history teachers at school would always drone on and on about it.

"Many of the basements in homes in the upper ring of the capital were not originally there," his favorite history teacher, Sam couldn't remember their name, had once explained, "We're creatures of the sky, why spend our time underground?"

It was a rhetorical question and a fair point. A lot of the buildings in the upper ring of the capital were tall with wide balconies, an easy jumping off point for everyone to fly to wherever they needed to go. Of course, that wasn't to say there weren't one story houses or buildings in existence, but even then, most of them had some entrance on the roof for the sake of convenience and a sense of freedom.

As a general rule, underground was not a very comfortable place to be. When Sam was in his father's basement, he'd always get this uncomfortable chill in his spine, and his wings would get fidgety, as though they were aware that there was nowhere else to go, nowhere to fly off to, no open sky.

Sam's teacher had smiled at the class's grimaces, those who owned a basement probably thinking about the discomfort. "Exactly," they had said, "However, when Dream led his army into the capital back in 435 A.R., bunkers were made so that the people could avoid the mass destruction doomed to follow. You all probably know the rest of the tale. With the army not completely obliterated and King Watson having some unknown power that the records have wiped, Dream was driven off from the Antarctic Empire, and he faded into obscurity."

One of Sam's classmates had raised their hand at that. "Where is he now?"

Sam had scoffed at that. "Dream is dead," he said, repeating what his father had always told him, "He's just some scary story to get kids to eat their vegetables."

Their history teacher, however, wore a thoughtful look on their face. "Historians have debated over Dream's whereabouts for centuries now," they conceded, "And many have agreed that the once-conqueror is dead. However, there have been rumors to the contrary."

Sam politely disagreed inside his head. Nobody was immortal.



Anyway, boring history lessons aside, Sam's father used that basement as a station for all of his potion endeavors, which, admittedly, frequently went south. The problem with potions is that there had to be some way to figure out how to channel the magic from the user to the liquid itself, and that was no easy task. Sam's father would agonize over it for hours, sometimes forgetting things like dinner or even sleeping.

"I've figured it out," he said one morning, "*Electricity* is the key, I can just feel it. I can't believe I haven't tried it before."

Sam had tried not to feel too uncomfortable at that, not saying anything as he left for school that day. The idea of his father using Sam's feathers to use electricity was a very uncomfortable thought, but there wasn't exactly a law against it. It wasn't like Sam's father was ripping out Sam's feathers or anything like that.

Sam's father had the ability to melt any object. He had experimented with melting feathers, but that had just left feathers that couldn't function as they should, since apparently the magic was only triggered by it being released in the crushing motion, not in melting.

Sam only knew this because his father would talk about it non-stop.

And then, that same day, when Sam came back from school, he no longer needed to worry about his father talking about experimentation non-stop.

Because after a few hours of peace and quiet, Sam finally decided to get concerned and head down to the basement.

And there, amidst the smell of ash and smoke, was his father's body. Dead. One experiment gone far too wrong.

After his father's funeral, Sam had managed to get a job for himself at the palace, fortunately enough.

It had started as a simple job as a kitchen boy, Sam actually quite adept in the kitchen thanks to the number of times his father forgot to make the meals. Sam's jobs mostly amounted to helping with small things, whether it be cleaning dishes, handing different ingredients to actual chefs, or going outside to collect ingredients that are being delivered to the palace.

However, Sam had hoped for more. He hoped for a guard's position eventually, maybe to the point that he could protect the royal family personally.

It was a fairy dream, Sam knew that. There was no way that a simple kitchen boy like him could ever be in a position to personally guard the royal family.

So, at fifteen years old, after two years of a life as a palace servant, Sam was heading to the front gates one day, where apparently a new delivery girl hadn't realized that they're *supposed* to be delivering the food to the back door, where all the servants came and went.

As Sam approached, he saw the delivery girl pace back and forth, her white wings puffed up nearly as much as her frizzy hair, which looked as though it had seen a war.

The guards at the gate looked particularly uncomfortable in being in her presence, their wings shifting behind them as they stayed straight backed. Maybe there were some downsides to being a part of the royal guard.

“Hello?” Sam asked, stopping in front of the girl as she continued to pace around in a million circles.

The girl came to an abrupt halt, her eyes wide and her wings instantly flexing out, like she was going to fly straight into the air and never come down, which would be pretty understandable.

“Hello,” she said, her voice in a rush like she was in a hurry to get something done, “Let’s hurry up and deliver these vegetables, huh?”

Sam blinked. “I mean, if you’re in that much of a hurry, I can always take them—”

“No, no, no!” The delivery girl exclaimed, shaking her head and causing her hair to bounce everywhere, “No, I need to see the entrance, right?”

Well, she had a point there, even though she was acting *very* strangely about it, so Sam just sighed and gestured for her to follow him. Normally, he’d offer for them to fly, which was the slightest bit unprofessional since the entrance was ground level, but Sam was willing to risk some unprofessionalism so that she could be able to go wherever she needed to be. Unfortunately, flying was not going to be an option with a cart that large, so they walked.

Fortunately enough, the girl actually managed to walk *very* quickly considering she was hauling a heavy cart behind her, and they made it to the back entrance in hardly any time at all.

“Okay,” Sam said, “This is the entrance, now you see it, I can take it from here.”

The girl shook her head again, at least placing the handles to the cart behind her. “I got instructions to go inside.”

Yeah... that wasn’t normal. Well, everything about this situation wasn’t normal, but Sam *knew* that most delivery people didn’t get instructions to go inside the palace. It just didn’t work like that.

“Do you have proof?” Sam asked, frowning.

The girl gave a short nod, going as if she was searching in her pockets for something. Sam waited for her to pull out a sheet of paper or something, but instead she pulled out a *knife*, grabbed Sam roughly by the arm, and pulled him to her so that the tip of the knife was resting on his back.

This... was not the turn of events Sam had been expecting for the day.

Sam was fifteen. He wasn't equipped to be a *hostage*.

"What are you doing?" he asked, his voice slightly more high-pitched than before, but he considered that fairly justified considering that he was a *hostage* now.

"I'm taking you hostage," the girl said, her voice in a low growl as she twisted Sam's arm back painfully, "We're going to walk inside like everything's normal, and if you make one wrong move, I'll make you regret it."

Sam was *not* paid enough for this.

But he was smart, so he nodded in agreement. He would just have to go along with it and hope that he wasn't aiding some sort of assassination attempt.

"Well, get moving," the girl hissed.

Sam obeyed, walking straight through the entrance and wishing that he had some sort of way of grabbing onto his feathers without knife girl noticing, but he really doubted he could manage to do that sort of thing, not when she was keeping a very close eye on all of her surroundings and Sam all at the same time.

So much for being a delivery girl. This person was definitely a trained assassin of some kind.

One of the chefs gave Sam a sharp look. "Who is this?" he demanded, his wings bristling in aggravation. He hated getting unexpected guests in his kitchen.

"She's, um, a new servant getting trained," Sam said, putting on a smile, "I'm leading her to the servant quarters."

The chef peered at Sam suspiciously, but he gave him a short nod. "Don't take too long. I still have jobs for you."

Sam nodded and quickly led the girl down through the servant's tunnels, hoping that they wouldn't be seen by any perceptive workers.

Sam hated it in the tunnels, even though they were wide and well-lit. The complete lack of windows or decoration reminded Sam painfully of the basement his father had died in, and a chill went down his back.

"So, captain," Sam said sarcastically, "Where to?"

"Don't call me that," the girl snapped, "Don't ever call me that."

Sam winced. Oh great, now he's gotten her angry. This was just a great day for him.

He made a mental note to never speak sarcastically to someone holding him hostage ever again.

"Okay, okay, sorry. What do you want me to call you?"

The girl hesitated, and for a moment, it was only the echoing sound of their own footsteps. “Puffy,” she said quietly, “My name is Puffy.”

Puffy. That was a strangely sweet name for someone who was currently holding him as a hostage and was probably off to kill the king.

“I’d say nice to meet you,” Sam huffed, “But seeing as you’re currently holding me at knife-point, it’s really not.”

“Just... stop talking,” Puffy muttered, “Lead me to the throne room.”

Sam shut his mouth, wishing he wasn’t in the middle of helping someone kill the king.

Sam led Puffy out of the tunnel that he knew led straight into the throne room, and he slowly cracked open the door, checking to see that the throne room was empty.

It was. Well, it mostly was. King Philza was speaking to his wife, and Sam practically felt the death sentence coming toward him.

“Alright,” Puffy whispered, “Forward march.”

Sam swallowed back the urge to puke, instead inhaling deeply through his nose as he pushed open the entrance to the tunnel and stepped into the throne room, Puffy’s knife still sitting on his back.

The king and queen both turned to look at them, their eyes wide, and Sam tried to give them an apologetic grin, but it really felt more like a look a mortal terror.

Sam opened his mouth in a weak attempt to explain, “I’m sor—”

“King Philza,” Puffy interrupted, her voice hard as she brought the knife to Sam’s throat, “I need your help.”

Wait, what?

Sam’s breathing was worsening, but the confusion mixed with his fear of dying. What was Puffy talking about? Wasn’t this an assassination attempt?

To Sam’s shock, King Philza actually *smiled*. “Why don’t you put the knife down, and then we can talk, alright?”

“I don’t believe you,” Puffy snarled, “The knife stays.”

Puffy’s hand was shaking. This did not assure Sam’s feeling of safety in the slightest.

“Alright,” the queen said placatingly, somehow also smiling, “Could you explain to us what you need?”

“He’s coming.” Puffy’s words came in short gasps, as though she was on a cusp of a panic attack. “Dream. He’s coming for me.”

Sam's heart skipped a beat. Dream? But he wasn't alive. He was a story, a historical figure that was long dead, a myth. There was no way that Dream was actually *alive*.

The king and queen, however, held expressions of shock, but not the sort of shock one might expect from someone hearing that fairies were actually real. It was the sort of shocked horror that one held when discovering that a war was coming.

It made Sam's stomach churn. Surely, surely, the king and queen didn't believe Dream was real?

"So, you want protection," King Philza asked, his voice grave.

"Yes," Puffy said. Sam could hear a rustling of feathers, and he assumed that she had spread her wings. "I'll also offer... my services."

"Please, darling," the queen said softly, "That won't be necessary. Put the knife down, and we can arrange everything."

There was a moment of hesitation, but at least Sam knew that he *probably* wasn't going to die a painful death.

Puffy slowly lowered the knife away from Sam's throat, and he let out a small breath of relief. He took a very, *very* large step away from Puffy.

"Dream isn't real," he said slowly, "Or, at least, he's dead now."

The king winced. "I wish I could say that's true, mate. Unfortunately, he is still *very much* alive."

"He's after me," Puffy said, her face paler than it was before she had put a knife on Sam's back.

"Why?" Sam asked, always too nosy for his own good. In his defense, his emotions were somewhat strained. This had been a very stressful day so far.

Puffy didn't say anything, looking down at the pristine floors. The queen gave Sam a small smile.

"Why don't you go back home for the day, darling?" she said, "I'm sure you must be tired from everything that's happened."

Sam didn't want to leave. He'd really rather figure out what was going on, but he knew that arguing with the queen was not a good idea, so he kept his mouth shut, turning around to go back through the tunnels.

"Oh, and, mate," the king said abruptly, causing Sam to turn back around in surprise. He gave Sam a smile. "Don't tell anyone else about this, alright? No need to cause a mass panic."

Sam swallowed but nodded. Don't tell anyone. That should be easy enough. Sam didn't exactly have anyone to talk to anyway.

The next day, Sam was greeted by Puffy, who was wearing somewhat nicer clothing and looked somewhat apologetic.

“Sorry for pretending I was going to kill you earlier,” she said, “It was a bluff, you know.”

Sam sighed. “It’s alright,” he said, “Just... don’t do it again?”

Puffy let out a laugh, looking surprised. “That easy, huh?”

Sam wasn’t exactly sure what she meant by that, and he frowned in confusion. “I mean, I could tell you it’s not alright, if you want.”

Puffy shook her head quickly. “No, no, that’s not necessary. I was just surprised, that’s all.”

Sam shrugged. “Fair enough,” he said, “Anyway, I really need to get back to work...” He glanced back at the bustling activity in the kitchen, the sound of pots and pans ringing behind him.

Puffy smirked. “Nope!” she said cheerfully, “You have a new job now.”  
New job? Since when? Nobody had told him about a new job.

“I do?”

Puffy nodded, grabbing Sam by the arm and leading him out into the *main hall* of the palace.

“Puffy, I’m not allowed out here,” Sam told her, “Servants can’t be seen, remember?”

Well, maybe she didn’t remember. She had been here for a day at most. Still, it felt like a pretty obvious rule. Sam felt horrifically out of place surrounded by freshly shined flooring and pristine paintings of kings and queen’s past.

“Yeah, well, you are now.” Puffy led him up a set of stairs and to a pair of doors. “*You* are officially my personal helper.”

Sam stared at her blankly. “I’m what now?”

Puffy sighed, swinging open the doors and revealing a nice enough looking bedroom. It was *certainly* way nicer than any bedroom Sam had ever had, but he had a feeling it wasn’t the height of luxury in palace standards.

There was a large bed sitting against the wall, a very nice window that one could go in and out of, and enough space for two people to have plenty of room to do a ballroom dance.

“Okay, so you don’t *technically* have a new job,” Puffy said, sitting down on her bed, the mattress sinking under her weight, “But it’s been so long since I was allowed to participate in anything rebellious ever, so I decided I might as well make friends!”

Sam stared at her. “So, you chose the person you nearly killed?”

“I already apologized for that,” Puffy said, her feathers fluffing slightly, “Besides, it’s not like I know anyone else here.”

Sam couldn’t exactly argue with that.

“I need the money, though,” Sam pointed out, “Also, won’t I get fired for, you know, not working?”

Puffy stiffened slightly, as though the thought had never occurred to her. “Well, when you put it that way, maybe you should go back,” she said, jumping to her feet, “Sorry for bothering you, I’ll be fine by myself—”

For some reason, Sam actually shook his head, cutting her off. “No, no, no, I’m sure it’s fine,” he lied, “I can give you company.”

“Five seconds ago, you wanted to leave.”

“Well, I’ve changed my mind.”

“Why?”

Sam hesitated. Why did he change his mind? He must’ve had a reason, right?

“I don’t know,” he admitted, “Maybe I think you look lonely.”

Puffy rolled her eyes. “Well that’s the stupidest reason I’ve ever heard,” she said, “You might as well say that you pity me and be done with it.”

Sam crossed his arms. “I feel bad for making you upset,” he said, “I’m pretty sure that’s different from pity.”

Puffy hummed, flopping back onto the bed. “Is it though?”

“Do you want me to stay or not?”

Puffy hesitated. “Fine,” she finally said, “Come on, I want to show you something.”

Sam followed Puffy back down the halls, hoping that nobody would catch them and send them out of the palace or something like that.

Fortunately, nobody did, and they stopped in front of a larger set of doors than the ones that led to Puffy’s bedroom. Sam could hear the clashing of swords and the sharp shouts of instruction coming from the other side.

“Is this the training room?” Sam asked incredulously.

Puffy nodded smugly. “Yep,” she said.

“Are we even allowed to be here?”

Puffy rolled her eyes, and Sam ignored the way her wings tensed. “You worry too much,” she said, “Come on, I want to practice.”

She opened the doors and slipped inside, and Sam quickly followed her.

The inside of the room was much louder, and Sam winced as Puffy led him to a weapons rack on the side of the wall.

Sam honestly had no idea how Puffy expected to get away with this. One of the captains—Sam could tell by the small insignia on their shirt—was already making their way toward them.

“Puffy...”

But Puffy was already grabbing a sword by the hilt and handing it to Sam. “Don’t worry about it.”

Sam glanced back at the captain. They were getting closer, and Sam’s heartrate began to pick up. Why did either of them think this was a remotely good idea? This was a disaster waiting to happen.

And then the captain was right in front of them, towering over them both as they placed their hands on their hips.

“What are you two doing here?”

Sam floundered for some kind of response, but Puffy straightened, standing as tall as any soldier Sam had ever seen, her wings cleanly tucked behind her back.

“Training, ser,” she said, her voice in an even monotone.

Sam stared at her in awe. Maybe he should be scared at how quickly she could go into ‘soldier mode’, but the only thing he could think of was how cool she looked. While Sam was floundering to find something to say, Puffy was already on top of it, her voice calm and collected.

Sam wished he could be like her someday.

The captain raised an eyebrow, looking at both Sam and Puffy skeptically. “Are you a part of this guard?”

“No, ser,” Puffy said automatically. Sam tried to straighten his own back and tuck his wings behind him like she had.

“Then why are you training?”

“I have been trained in combat before, ser.” Puffy nodded over to Sam. “And my friend would like to be better trained as well. Considering that there is always an impending threat that comes with living in the palace, I consider it worth my time to practice when I have the time.”



The captain sighed. “I appreciate your respect and reasoning, but I can’t trust children to not hurt themselves with weapons, especially during a training session. Come back later, and maybe I’ll show you a few tricks.”

Puffy gave the captain a short nod. “Yes, ser.”

And with that, she turned around, grabbed Sam by the arm, and marched out of the room.

“Well that went well,” Sam said sarcastically as they sat on the balcony of Puffy’s bedroom, staring out at citizens flying around the city.

“It could’ve gone worse,” Puffy said quietly.

Sam hummed. “How did you do that, though?” he asked, “I mean, how did you stay so calm?”

“Practice,” Puffy said shortly.

Later that day, they returned to the training room, where Puffy showed the captain that she actually was quite proficient with the sword, and the captain agreed to help Sam as well.

Sam, in all honesty, wasn’t sure how he got to this point in time. Just yesterday, he was sent to collect vegetables, and now he was being trained with a sword just because Puffy wanted to spend time with him?

It didn’t make that much sense to Sam, but he wasn’t complaining. This monumentally increased his chances of being able to join the royal guard or the army at some point, which would be a *dream*.

Sam wasn’t a dreamer. He wasn’t going to waste time with potions or technologies that were only going to lead to failure and death. He’d rather actually do some good with his life.

Puffy still seemed uncomfortable around the captain, although Sam couldn’t imagine why. Every time she slipped up in the *slightest*, she’d apologize, casting her eyes down to the floor like a kicked dog.

It was strange. Most of Puffy’s mistakes were things that Sam didn’t even *notice*, and yet she acted like they were the worst offense in history.

The captain would only shake their head and tell Puffy to continue on, and Puffy would always give the captain a strange look, as though she was expecting much worse.

After a few days of their routine of Sam getting dragged out of work to train with Puffy and just hang out in general, he finally summoned up the courage to ask about it.

“What’s your problem with the captain anyway?” Sam had asked as they explored the library, Puffy grabbing books on battle strategy.

Puffy rolled her eyes. “They’re weird,” she said, “I mean, there’s no consequences for failure.”

Sam frowned. He had suffered plenty of consequences for failure. The captain never hesitated to give him an earful when he did something stupid with his stance or sword, telling him that it was an easy way to get *killed*.

“I mean... I get yelled at plenty, if that’s what you mean.”

Puffy let out a growl of frustration, slamming another book down on their stack. “That’s not what I’m talking about,” she said through gritted teeth, her feathers looking frazzled again.

Sam really wished he could help preen them, but he knew that it was not at all his place to ask.

“Then what are you talking about?” he asked.

Puffy sighed, taking a deep breath as though she was actively trying to calm herself. “You know,” she said quietly, rubbing her forearm a little bit, “physical punishment.”

Sam blinked. “Isn’t that illegal?”

She snapped her head over to him, her eyes somewhat wide. Sam wondered what was going on her head at that moment. Surprise? Skepticism? Relief? Horror? All four?

“Is it?”

Sam nodded. “Well, physical punishment is... you know, wrong.”

An expression of understanding crossed Puffy’s features, and her mouth formed a small ‘o’.

“Oh,” she said quietly, “Are you sure?”

“I’m pretty sure,” Sam said, “I mean, can’t you just ask King Philza? You talk to him, right?”

Sam had been interrupted from hanging out with Puffy before by the king, and they always stepped into a private room with grim expressions. Sam had always wondered what they were talking about, but he had a suspicion it had something to do with Dream.

To be honest, Sam still had his doubts that Dream was alive, but he didn’t dare say that around Puffy. As a matter of fact, whenever Puffy saw anything about Dream, whether it be a page on a history book or a ballad about the Antarctic Empire’s victories, she got extra prickly.

“I guess you’re right,” Puffy agreed, “I just don’t want to bother him.”

“I’m sure he won’t mind.”

Puffy frowned, like she seriously doubted that, and Sam abruptly switched the conversation over to the annoying delivery boy who insisted that Sam take his moldy bread. Sam wasn't sure who he even thought he was, but Sam refused to give him the time of day, telling him to go find some items that were of actual *quality*.

Besides, all of the bread at the palace was handmade.

As they continued to make their way through the library, Sam's eyes landed on a book about potions, and he paused, picking it up off the shelf in spite of himself.

The cover was thick and leathery, and there were small silver letters that made the words: *The Failures and Advances of Potion Making*

Sam frowned, flipping through the pages. It seemed to be mostly about the various failed methods over the years, and the one time the potion was semi-successful, although the potion itself caused horrible damage before it's time, killing the creator of the method and thus losing it to history.

Sam questioned how they even knew the potion was successful then, but apparently there were some letters from a family member that backed it up.

*High levels of energy have shown to be the closest to channeling magic from the feather into the liquid, although this almost always leads to a useless potion or an explosion.*

So maybe Sam's father really had been onto something when he said that electricity could help with his potion making methods. Still, Sam himself was uninterested in getting himself killed, so he put the book back on the shelf and continued to follow Puffy through the library.

"What were you looking at?" Puffy asked.

Sam shrugged. "Nothing important," he muttered, trying not to think about finding his father's body in that stupid basement two years ago.

Puffy didn't push it.

After a few weeks of their routine, otherwise known as the routine that Sam questioned how he still had his job at that point, Puffy wore an especially grim look on her face.

"I'm going to be going away for a little while," she said, "Me and Phil."

Sam frowned. Despite their rocky start, Sam had actually gotten quite fond of Puffy, and he didn't like the idea of her leaving.

"Can I go with you?" he asked, even though he knew his chances were ridiculously low.

Puffy hesitated, staring up at the arched ceiling. "He probably won't want you to come," she said slowly, her wings shifting behind her as she thought, "He already hates the idea of me going, even though I'm fifteen and perfectly capable."

Sam knew it too. “Okay,” he sighed, “Can you at least tell me where you’re going? Or is it a secret?”

Sam was used to Puffy keeping her secrets, but again, the idea of her leaving caused worry to gnaw at his chest, especially when he knew that Puffy was running away from ‘Dream’.

“Go up to the roof with me,” she finally said, walking toward a window. Sam followed her, and together they flew outside of the palace and sat down on top of a spire, staring down at the buildings below.

It was windier at such a high altitude, and Puffy’s hair flew wildly all over her face.

“So?” Sam asked, forced to raise his voice in the wind.

Puffy sighed. “We’re going to Enderia.”

Sam frowned. “Where?”

Puffy raised her eyebrows. “You know? The ruins of the once great kingdom? *He* destroyed it all.”

Sam vaguely remembered learning about the ruins of Enderia. Something about Dream destroying it on his way to the Antarctic Empire. It was more of a footnote in the history books, and it had been a decent amount of time since he had taken any classes.

“Oh,” he finally said.

Puffy nodded. “Yeah, well, there’s a dual-winged person who’s willing to do a ritual that will...” Puffy paused. “Exchange Phil and I’s powers.”

It took a moment for Sam to properly hear the words. But when he did, his mind felt a bit dizzy. Exchange powers?

“What do you mean?” Sam asked, “How-how is that even *possible*.”

Puffy sighed. “It’s complicated.”

“Try me.”

Puff wore a thoughtful expression, and it didn’t exactly take a genius to know that she was weighing the pros and cons of telling Sam what the heck was going on.

“Dream... he wants my power,” Puffy admitted quietly, her wings curling around herself slightly, “it’s um, it’s really rare.”

“Oh,” Sam said lamely. He bit back the urge to ask Puffy what the power was.

Puffy let out a shaky laugh. “I’ve never told you what it is, have I?”

“You don’t have to say.”

“No,” Puffy said quietly, “I want to.” She took a loose white feather from her wing and stared at it. “You know how all black-borns have the ability to kill?”

Who didn’t? Sam nodded.

“I’m, it’s the same for white wings, but in the reverse.”

Sam stared. He hadn’t heard anything about this well, ever.

Then again, Sam wasn’t even sure he had seen anyone with white wings before Puffy.

“Basically... I can make anyone temporarily immortal.” Puffy shrugged. “I don’t want to need it, and Dream would probably just... use me again if I kept it, but if Phil had my power, well, Dream wouldn’t be able to *touch* him. Seems like a pretty good deal to me.”

Sam was in shock. Immortality? Exchanging powers?

It did seem like a pretty good arrangement, although the idea of Sam just having a *different* power made his skin crawl slightly. His power was *his*, nobody else’s.

“And you want to do this?” Sam clarified.

Puffy nodded, her face suddenly hard. “I do.”

Sam wasn’t stupid enough to ask why.

“Can I come with you?”

Puffy let out a small groan. “Sam, Phil is leaving his wife behind. I really doubt you’re going to be allowed to come along.”

Sam stared back down at the city, kicking his dangling legs slightly as he thought. “Yeah,” he said quietly, “I’ll miss you.”

Puffy said nothing.

Sam said nothing.

Puffy stared at him.

Sam stared back.

“*Fine*,” Puffy huffed, “You can go with me, but only if you spend five hours every day practicing fighting. Magic and swords. I don’t want you getting hurt because you ‘missed me.’”

And so that’s exactly what Sam did. When he wasn’t learning how to slice someone in half with a sword, he was learning how to quickly grab feathers and crush them in his hands while still dodging away from an enemy, and when he wasn’t doing that, he was learning how to properly hit a target fifty feet in the air above him.

And then the day finally arrived.

Phil looked reluctant to bring Sam with them. “You’re just a kid,” he had tried.

Puffy, however, refused to stand for it. “He’s been working harder than anyone else here to be equipped to come with us.”

Phil pursed his lips; his wings ruffling. But he stared into Puffy’s defiant eyes, and he sagged slightly, turning to Sam.

“If something goes wrong, you are going to *hide*,” he instructed, “Don’t be a hero.”

Sam nodded. Hopefully, nothing would go wrong.

The trip was only two days worth of flying, but they traveled by night. Puffy had explained it was so they would be less easily tracked, which only made Sam wonder. Was Dream seriously following them? Sam had long given up on the notion that the man was dead. Puffy and Phil’s conviction seemed to be plenty of proof that Dream was certainly alive and active, which was honestly terrifying.

But the trip went without incident, and they reached the mountain where Enderia once stood without difficulty.

As they touched down on the decrepit old steps leading up the mountain and to some abandoned buildings, Sam realized that Enderia must’ve once been a truly nice place. What remained of some arches showed intricate carvings, and some of the walls seemed to be showing rough depictions of stories. Sam could make out the image of dragons and beautiful wings that looked like the artist had made them out of the stars itself.

All of the art and carvings were, of course, mostly way too old to make out, but Sam couldn’t help but to feel bad for the culture that once existed there.

As they continued up the path, Sam spotted a collection of what looked to be crumbled up tombstones, moss and flowers overtaking them. One of the tombstones had so many flowers that it was barely visible.

“The paranoid idiot refuses to leave his cave, and he refuses to let anyone in except for me and Puffy,” King Philza was saying, “so the rest of you need to stand guard outside.” Phil turned around and looked Sam dead in the eyes. “If something goes wrong, what do you do?”

Sam swallowed. “Hide.”

“And?”

“No heroics.”

Phil nodded with a small smile, giving Sam’s shoulder a comforting squeeze.

“It’ll be all over soon,” he said, probably hoping to sound comforting even when he glanced at the sky with clear nervousness.

Sam took a deep breath. He refused to let Phil's nervousness get the better of him. It would all be over soon.

It would all be over soon.

Phil turned around and headed toward a seemingly uninteresting stone wall, and Puffy flashed Sam a nervous smile before following him.

"Stay safe," Sam said weakly.

"Yeah, you too."

Phil was doing something, Sam wasn't entirely sure what, and suddenly the wall opened up a crack, allowing Puffy and Phil to slip through.

The stone wall shut with a resounding clap of stone, and a cloud of dust caused a few guards to cough.

Then they waited.

And waited.

And waited.

Sam knew it had only been like ten minutes, but it felt like ten minutes too long as he paced in front of the stone doors, wondering what was going on in there. Earlier that day, Puffy said they'd know they were done when there was a bright light, but there hadn't been any such light yet, and Sam was getting just a little nervous, okay?

Trying to forget his frustration, Sam marched away from the entrance and to the flower tombstones, wondering if there was any art on the ones that were more than rubble.

There was, in fact, small carvings on the tombstones that were still whole, and Sam managed to forget at least some of his anxiety as he brushed away some of the flowers to look at the names, although he couldn't exactly understand the quotes underneath them, ancient languages and all that.

When he reached the most flowery grave, Sam had to peer closely to make out a name.

Diane? Dris?

Underneath there was a picture of a young girl, who seemed to be reaching for the sun.

And then the sound of wing beats interrupted Sam's train of thought, causing him to snap his head up abruptly.

People were flying toward them, and from the way arrows suddenly began flying toward them, they weren't friendly.

Sam scrambled out of the way as an arrow landed in the ground next to him, his breathing coming in gasps.

The king had said to hide. Sam had been given direct orders to *hide* if he were to run into any trouble.

The soldiers were already drawing their bows, successfully shooting down a few of the attackers.

A few of the soldiers had an arrow shot straight into their chest, and Sam couldn't stop the horrified scream ripping out of him as their bodies toppled to the ground.

Already, Sam could smell blood.

Sam scrambled to his feet as the enemy started landing on the ground, and the duel of arrows became duel of swords and feathers.

Sam backed away from the smell of smoke and the cries of pain, instead looking to the rock surface where Phil and Puffy were hopefully preforming their ritual successfully.

Sam should be hiding, but could he really live with himself if he knew that he had abandoned all these people? Surely, surely, there was a way to help as men from not sides were mercilessly the down.

Sam flinched back as a blast of ice came surging toward him, and he rolled out of the way, sprinting to the rock face.

He had to make sure Puffy would be okay, he had to—

And suddenly, there was one final piercing cry, and everything went silent.

Sam was suddenly aware of his own breathing as his footsteps crunched against the forest leaves, painfully obvious.

If any of the enemy survived, Sam knew he only had a few more moments to live, and he was going to spend every last one of them getting to that stupid stone barrier.

For some reason, however, Sam actually made it to the barrier. He actually managed to rest his hands against the cold, smooth stone.

“Well, well, well,” a smooth voice said behind Sam, “who do we have here?”

Sam felt his heart skip a beat as he spun around, instinctually reaching for one of his feathers from the pouch on his belt.

His hand stilled when he saw the figure in front of him.

The lone figure stood in a field full of bodies, his neon green wings spread wide behind him, almost as though he wanted Sam to see how green they were. A mask sat on his face, a smile drawn on the front.



It was one thing to believe that Dream might actually be alive.

It was another thing entirely to see him in the flesh.

There was the slimmest of possibilities that this was just an imposter, someone who wears Dream's identity to cause more fear than necessary.

But there was something in the way he just spoke, something in the way he was walking toward Sam, something in the way he made Sam fear for his life just by the way Dream tilted his head that made Sam doubt it.

This was the real Dream.

Dream was alive and *terrifying*.

Sam couldn't breathe as he pressed his back against the stone wall, trying to grab a feather out of his pouch as his fingers trembled.

Dream only laughed, now only feet away from Sam, and then inches.

Sam finally got a proper hold on one of his feathers and crushed it in his fist, causing electricity to crackle at his fingertips. He quickly reached up to touch any part of Dream he could get to first.

But Dream smiled, practically showing fangs, and he grabbed Sam so tightly by the wrist that Sam let out a piercing cry of pain.

"Why don't we find somewhere else to channel that?" Dream asked, sounding completely undisturbed as he pulled a yellow feather from his pouch and pressed it into Sam's hand.

The feather glowed under the electricity like a pulsing fire, and Dream's grin widened as he twisted Sam's wrist back, forcing Sam to drop the feather.

As soon as it hit the ground, yellow flowers bloomed, and Dream let out a victorious laugh.

Sam was still too terrified to say anything at all.

"Well, that *is* convenient," Dream purred, pulling out his sword and bringing it to Sam's neck, "Of course, that doesn't mean I'm not too late. Puffy will have to die for her treason, but—"

Sam's voice returned to him as soon as Puffy was mentioned.

"Don't," he gasped, "don't kill Puffy."

Dream stared at Sam for a moment, tilting his head. A smile formed on his face and he started laughing again.

"You are *adorable*," he cooed, squeezing Sam's cheeks. If Sam had been braver, he might've growled at the blatant breach in personal space, but at the one time, he was still frozen by

fear. “Just look at you, still a child.”

“Shut up,” Sam snapped.

Dream’s smile did not abate, and he ran his fingers through Sam’s hair. “Poor thing, are you scared? Have you flown too far from your nest? Are you trying to find your mother?”

The back of Sam’s throat burned, and he forced himself to hide the urge he had to burst into tears. He wasn’t about to cry in front of the most feared person in history.

“Please,” Sam gasped, “Please, just leave Puffy alone. I’ll do anything.”

Dream tilted his head. “Anything?” he asked, a new inflection in his tone.

“Anything,” Sam gasped.

The smile on Dream’s face grew more sinister, and he held Sam’s jaw in a vice-like grip.

“Would you pledge your eternal loyalty to me?”

Sam’s ears started ringing as the weight of Dream’s words suddenly crashed over him.

Eternal loyalty. To *Dream*.

Sams life would never be the same. Sam would be forced into a life of murder and conquest and no free will.

“What?” Sam whispered, his voice cracking.

Dream frowned slightly. “Here’s how I see it,” he said, as though he were having some sort of causal conversation, “if you refuse my offer, you die, and I kill Puffy—“ Sam’s breathing hitched as he imagine Puffy’s dead body. “*Or*, if you accept, you can both live.”

Living a life at Dream’s mercy was probably worse than death. But Sam didn’t want Puffy to die. He didn’t want that to happen because of Sam’s own selfishness.

There was only one real option.

“Fine,” Sam whispered, a few tears actually managing to escape, “I accept.”

Dream smiled, resting his hand on Sam’s shoulders as he brushed the tears away from Sam’s face. “Don’t worry,” he said, “I’ll take good care of you.”

Dream’s base was in the mountains, and Sam had the unfortunate pleasure to discover that it was all *underground*.

The torchlit tunnels made Sam’s wings itch as he repressed the urge to run in the other direction, to attempt to free himself in the open air.

He belonged to Dream now.

In spite of the fact he knew the notion was ridiculous, Sam still instinctually memorized the halls, charting out paths for escape.

Of course, Sam could never escape, and he wouldn't even try it. The last thing he wanted to do was send Puffy to an early death.

"Tell me," Dream said quietly, his voice bouncing off the halls, "Do you know anything about potion making?"

Sam's nausea returned full force. Had it really come to this? Had Sam's life really become some sick circle, where the only thing Sam was destined to do was create potions underground and die a painful death, just like his father before him?

Now all Sam needed was a child to leave behind, and he truly would be like father like son.

But Sam didn't have a child, and he would *never* have a child. Better get used to that truth now than to get trapped in some sort of daydream.

"I know some," Sam admitted honestly, "Why?"

Dream turned the corner, and they headed down more stairs, where the halls were even darker.

"Call it curiosity."

Funnily enough, that did nothing for the dread in Sam's gut.

They stopped in front of a strong-looking wood door, and Dream pulled out a key to open it.

"I gave Puffy too much room," Dream informed Sam, "I won't make the same mistake twice."

Sam couldn't even begin to figure out what on earth that meant before Dream grabbed him roughly by the arm and shoved him in the room.

Sam landed on damp stone, his forearms stinging from catching the fall. He quickly scrambled back to his feet to ask Dream what that was for, but Dream only smiled and slammed the door shut.

There was a click of a lock, and Sam was in utter darkness.

Sam froze, waiting for his eyes to adjust in the cramped darkness.

"Dream?" Sam asked, his voice shaking slightly as he walked forward, reaching for the door, "What—"

"Don't worry," Dream's voice came from the other side of the door, "I'll be back for you in a few days."

Wait, days?

Sudden panic gripped at Sam's chest, and he instantly grabbed the door handle, shaking it violently.

"Dream, wait," Sam pleaded, "Wait! Please!"

Dream didn't come back, even while Sam screamed profanities at the top of his lungs, and kicked at the door repeatedly, and sent lightning at the door, trying to get out, he needed to get *out*. He couldn't be there for *days*.

Eventually, Sam's energy to fight completely drained out of him, and he leaned against the door, trying to catch his breath. His hands were bleeding from how much he had tried to punch and claw his way out, and tears had long since started spilling out of his eyes.

He didn't want this. He wanted to be back at the palace with Puffy. He wanted to return to an old life where Dream wasn't real, and Sam's biggest worry was being taken hostage.

He would probably never see the palace again.

Sam wasn't sure how long he had been in that room, occasionally dozing off, crying more often than not, screaming when he had the chance.

And then finally, *finally* the door opened, and light filled the room, causing Sam to squint slightly.

Dream loomed over him, and Sam let out a relieved sob.

"Dream?"

Dream crouched down in front of Sam, running his fingers through Sam's hair. "It's okay, little bird," he whispered, "Now, you don't want that to happen again, do you?"

Sam shook his head rapidly. "Please," he begged, "*Please*."

Dream shushed him, cupping Sam's cheek with his hand. "As long as you do as I say, you will never force me to put you into that place."

Sam had planned on doing what Dream said for Puffy's sake anyway, but now he was nodding so rapidly that he felt like his head was about to fall off.

"Yes, I'm sorry, please—"

"A simple 'yes, sir' will suffice," Dream said.

Sam's breathing stuttered, but he managed to force the words out. "Yes, sir."

Dream smiled. "See, you're already learning."

After a week of Sam training to be a better fighter and learning exactly what Dream expected of him (including but not limited to clipping wings, preening after Sam had been particularly successful, and strict instructions not to talk to any of Dream's other people), Dream led him to a room on one of the upper levels of his base, where the lighting was slightly better.

The room was filled with empty beakers and candles. There was a small fireplace in the side of the room, and a cabinet full of different liquids.

Sam's stomach sank.

"I'll give you an easy job," Dream said softly, squeezing Sam's shoulder, "I just want you to make a potion that make flowers. You can do that for me, can't you?"

Sam opened his mouth to protest, but then he remembered what punishment awaited him for disobedience.

"Yes sir," Sam said through gritted teeth.

Maybe if Sam died while in Dream's service, Dream wouldn't go after Puffy. Then, Sam could get the best of both worlds.

Still, Sam couldn't be sure of that.

"Good," Dream said. He dropped three yellow feathers into Sam's palm, "You have three attempts. Use them wisely."

And with that, Dream left the room, locking the door behind him with that familiar click.

Sam took a deep breath, staring at the yellow feathers and then back at his own dark green ones.

*High levels of energy have shown to be the closest to channeling magic from the feather into the liquid, although this almost always leads to a useless potion or an explosion.*

Sam suddenly remembered the way the feather Sam had electrocuted earlier had actually sprouted flowers after Dream dropped it to the ground.

Could Sam actually create potions? Was that actually possible?

Well, there was only one way to find out.

Sam failed his first attempt. And his second attempt. And the third attempt after that.

Dream punished Sam appropriately.

After the fourth failed time of being locked up in the potions room, Sam finally found the courage to ask Dream for something he desperately needed.

“May I have a journal, sir?” Sam kept his eyes trained on the floor, hoping that would appease Dream to him.

“And why,” Dream said, his voice cold, “would I give you such an expensive item?”

Sam stopped himself from saying that a journal wasn’t a luxury item. He supposed in poorer districts, it was harder to get ones hands on neatly bound paper and leather covers.

“I need it for potion making,” Sam explained quietly, “So I remember what I’ve tried and what I can try in the future.”

Dream hummed. “And you think you’re deserving of such an object? I’ve given you plenty of times to prove your potion knowledge to me, and so far you’ve only failed again and again and again.”

Sam’s heart was hiccuping. “With all due respect,” he said slowly, “It has taken famous scientists centuries of failed attempts to make any progress. I can’t promise it won’t take me years to perfect a method.”

Dream hummed. “Fair point,” he said, “Fine, I’ll give you a journal. It’ll be hard to get my hands on, but if it helps you figure out how to create potions within the decade, I consider that a worthwhile investment.”

Sam felt relief flood through him. “Thank you, sir.”

Dream provided Sam with a large but humble journal, and Sam treasured it. He tried to keep how much he liked it a secret, however. The last thing he needed was Dream using it against him.

It took Sam six years to successfully create a potion.

Two years later, when Sam was twenty-three, nearly twenty-four, years old, Dream came back from one of his quests with a strange bundle in his arms.

“I have a *different* assignment for you,” Dream said lightly.

Sam frowned, confused. He had assumed that the only thing Dream would ever really want him for was Potion making. Why would dream be changing things up now? Had Sam done something wrong? was dream simply satisfied with the mediocre potion Sam had been able to create? Or was there something more?

“What is it, sir?” Sam asked, keeping his tone as respectful as possible.

Dream smiled and carefully placed the bundle in Sam’s arms.

Sam stared.

It was a baby. A blonde haired, bright eyed baby.

It felt fragile in Sam's arms, like it could break if Sam squeezed it too hard. Sam stared at trying to comprehend why Dream would even give him a baby to begin with. Did Dream want him to started babysitting job? Unlikely, but not impossible, he supposed.

The baby was staring at Sam with the sort of fascination on his face like he had never seen another human being before. Same resisted the urge to coo as the baby shifted a little bit in his arms. Its eyes fluttered closed like it was comfortable enough to fall asleep.

He was *adorable*.

Sam's heart sunk into his stomach and he felt suddenly sick.

And the baby was *Dream's*.

Sam's heart lurched suddenly, and the idea of such an innocent creature being in Dream's care gave Sam half a mind do take the child and run.

But Sam was better trained than that, so he stayed put, waiting for further instruction.

"This is Thomas," Dream said, sounding cheerful as he gently brushed the hair away from the baby's forehead, "and he is a black-born."

Shock filtered through Sam's system. This was a black-born? But he was so small, so precious. It was strange to think that he might one day be someone everyone feared.

Even when Sam saw a small part of Thomas's wings peak out from underneath the blankets, showing the black feathers, Sam couldn't bring himself to be afraid.

Well, he wasn't afraid of Thomas. He was *terrified* of what Dream would do to him. Or with him.

But Dream was good to Sam. Maybe he would be good to the child too.

Sam tried to imagine Thomas with bruises on his face, and he didn't feel all that reassured.

"His parents cast him aside."

Yet another incomprehensible statement. Who in their right minds would ever cast aside this child? He was so young, so innocent. His magic hadn't even come in yet.

But Dream wouldn't lie—*yes he would*—so Sam nodded.

"What do you want me for, sir?" Sam asked

Dream snorted. "You're smarter than that," he said, "I want you to raise him, obviously."

Wait. What?

Dream was giving Sam a baby. A baby that Dream was likely to use for his own ends. And Dream was allowed to do that; Sam wouldn't presume to know better than him, and yet...

Thomas was the sweetest creature Sam had seen in nine years. Thomas was the only person Sam had touched apart from Dream in nine years.

If Dream wanted Sam to take care of him, Sam sure as hell was going to do that to the best of his ability.

“Of course,” Sam said, still staring at Thomas’s small face, practically entranced, “Thank you.”

“Just remember,” Dream said, “He will know me as his father. You will be nothing more than his guard.”

It hurt, but Sam knew better to expect anything less. After all, it was Dream who had probably saved Thomas, if his story was correct, and Dream was the reason either of them were alive.

It was hard to remember the time before Dream, back when Sam was actually allowed to fly.

Sam hadn’t flown in nine years. He wasn’t sure he even remembered how at this point.

He prayed Thomas wouldn’t suffer the same fate. Maybe, just maybe, Dream would let this baby know that feeling of being in the sky.

“I understand.”

And this began Sam’s life of taking care of a newborn. In all honesty, Sam had *no* idea of what he was doing, and every time Thomas let out any sign of distress, he panicked and wondered if Sam had accidentally hurt and nearly killed him.

Taking care of Thomas didn’t exactly keep Sam exempt from his other duties. He still had to work on potions, and Dream was kind enough to hold onto Thomas when Sam was working on a potion that had a risk of exploding and killing everyone in the room.

When Sam could get away with it, he played with Thomas, making cooing noises and tickling the boy until he shrieked with laughter.

Thomas’s laugh made Sam’s chest warmer than he’d think he’d ever felt it before.

And Sam worked tirelessly to hide this from Dream, but the first word to come out of his mouth when he was thirteen months old was “Sammy.”

Sam almost cried right there and then, but instead, he held it in until he was safely in his potions room, writing down the event in his journal.

“Aw,” he replied instead, “If I’m Sammy, does that make you Tommy?”

Thomas had giggled at that, and the nickname stuck.

Dream had long since stopped checking Sam’s journal for any notes, so Sam filled it with the little milestones Tommy crossed as well as potion information. It was risky, but Sam wanted



something to hold onto when Dream refused to let Sam have anything to do with Tommy again.

Dream had already started spending more and more time with Tommy, clearly getting Tommy used to the idea that Dream was his father. Dream's favorite thing to do with Tommy was to explain how dangerous black-borns were to him, which made Sam's skin boil.

Dream probably had a good reason, but Tommy had done nothing wrong, and to tell him he was some dangerous beast just felt *wrong*.

As soon as Tommy was fully toilet trained, Dream cut Sam from his life altogether.

Well, not completely, Dream was apparently worried about Thomas's security, so Sam was now in charge of guarding Tommy's room, which was on the deepest level of the stronghold, far away from any sunlight.

Tommy's room looked more like a cell. Sam didn't understand why Dream couldn't treat him better. At least give him some blankets to nest.

But it wasn't Sam's place to argue against Dream. Sam's job was to guard Tommy, and that was what he would do, no matter how much the idea of never speaking to Tommy again made his heart want to shrivel and die.

Sam meticulously counted the days in his journal ever since his arrival, but the day Dream walked into Tommy's room with someone in chains, it was a few days before what Sam had presumed to be Tommy's third birthday.

Sam couldn't hear much from the other side of the thick stone walls designed to keep any sound from coming out, but even he heard the confused cries from the inside of that room, and he his wings bristled in aggravation. He wanted to go in and see what was wrong, but with Dream in the room, Sam knew that would be a recipe for disaster.

Sam stayed where he was, his nails digging into his palms when he heard a sharp cry.

And suddenly there was silence.

Sam held his breath and waited.

And waited.

And then Dream left the room, still deadly silent, and he turned to Sam, his blank mask practically staring into his soul.

"Someone will be coming to collect the body."

Sam's heart stopped.

The body? What did Dream mean by *the body*? Oh prime, was Tommy dead? After all these years of taking care of Tommy, was he actually dead?

“Sir?” Sam asked, his voice strangled.

Dream scoffed. “You’re smart, figure it out.”

Sam’s hands were fully shaking now, and he waited fifteen seconds after Dream was out of sight to tear into Tommy’s room, damn the consequences.

Tommy was sitting in the corner of the room, freshly preened wings wrapped around himself protectively as he stared at something on the ground.

That something was a body.

And Sam finally understood.

Bile burned at the back of Sam’s throat, and it took everything Sam had not to throw up all over the stone floors.

Instead, Sam crouched down in front of Tommy, blocking the body from view.

“Tommy?” Sam whispered, the nickname Sam had used for him slipping out before he could stop himself, “Are you alright?”

It was a stupid question, but Sam couldn’t think of anything else he could say.

Tommy wmooved his wings slightly out of the way, making it easier for Sam to see the three year old’s tear-stained face.

“I’m good,” Tommy sniffed, “Daddy says I did good.”

Sam looked back to the body before he could stop himself, and Tommy stiffened, looking far more like a soldier than a toddler.

“I’m sorry,” Tommy whimpered, like it was his fault that Dream did not know the respectable way to treat children.

“Don’t be,” Sam said softly, “Do you need a hug?”

Thomas hesitated, but after a moment of internal deliberation, he thrust himself into Sam’s arms.

“I did good,” Tommy whispered again, “But I—“ Tommy hiccuped. “I didn’t like it.”

Sam gently ran his fingers through Tommy’s hair. “It’s okay,” he whispered, “It’s going to be okay.”

It wasn’t okay.

Apparently Dream had told Tommy that the only way he would get preened was if he killed someone.

Sam understood that preening was a reward. He himself didn't get preened unless he had completed a new potion recipe, but to ask a child to *kill*?

Sam just couldn't shake this feeling of wrongness from it.

Still, Sam knew that late night cuddle sessions with Tommy were way too risky on a regular basis, so he was forced to stand still outside the door while Tommy was forced to kill yet another person.

When Tommy was four, his peeping stage started.

As soon as Sam could hear the high-pitched peeps, an overwhelming urge filled him to check up in Tommy and make sure that he was alright overcame Sam, and he nervously began picking at his feathers in a bid for self control.

"Sir," Sam begged Dream when he came, "His peeping started, if you would let me—"

Dream tilted his head at Sam, his wings flexing out in a threatening manner. Sam became deathly silent.

"I think I'll leave him be just a little while longer," he said, "Don't worry, I'll be there soon."

'Soon' meant hours, apparently, and Sam had nearly pulled half of his feathers out in that time, agonized by Tommy's increasingly desperate peeping.

And then finally, *finally* Dream came back, entering that dark room and calming Tommy's peeping down significantly, much to Sam's relief.

And yet a part of him felt ill at the thought of Dream giving Tommy that solace. Sam wanted to be the one to grant Tommy comfort, to hug him close—

Sam shook himself out of those thoughts. There was no point in dreaming of what was never meant to be.

Still, when Dream left, Sam snuck into Tommy's cell to comfort him himself.

The years continued on.

Tommy grew up, and the older he got, the harder Dream worked him.

Sam was very much relieved to see that Dream had taken Tommy out to learn to fly. Unfortunately, it meant that Dream had taken to clipping Tommy's wings along with Sam's.

Whenever Sam dared, he snuck into Tommy's cell, offering words of comfort and companionship when he could.

Eventually, Tommy started asking Sam questions about the outside world. Sam tried to answer as best he could, although he himself struggled to remember what anything from the

outside looked like. It had been over a decade since he'd left this place.

"You should try strawberries," Sam said, recalling his favorite fruit from when he was a child, "They're these red fruits that taste like..."

Sam trailed off. He couldn't remember.

Tommy had looked entranced, however, his eyes wide and sparkling more brightly than Sam had seen them since Dream had placed him in Sam's arms seven years ago.

"Do you think father would let me have them?" Tommy asked, his choice hushed.

Sam's eyes trailed unintentionally to the scars on Tommy's forearms, and the echoes of Tommy's screams from the other side of the thick wall rang loudly in Sam's ears.

But how was Sam supposed to explain that Dream wasn't good to Tommy when Sam struggled to believe it himself?

Dream had been kind and merciful to Sam.

But there was nothing kind in the way he had been treating Tommy.

But what did that mean for Sam? Had Dream hurt Sam in the same way he hurt Tommy? If Dream was at fault, did that mean Sam was at fault? Or was all of this some lie that Sam had made up because he was too bitter over the fact that he couldn't selfishly keep Tommy to himself?

Sam didn't know. And if he didn't know, how was he supposed to explain?

So instead, Sam just said, "Dream might let you have strawberries."

It felt like a lie. Why would Dream feed Tommy strawberries when he starved him over—

"Who's Dream?"

Sam froze, feeling all of his feathers sit up.

Sam hadn't said Dream's name in *years*.

And Tommy hadn't heard Dream's name *at all*.

It was a strange thought, a seven year old boy with no idea as to Dream was, not once being told as a ghost story that many refused to believe.

Sam belatedly realized that he once didn't believe Dream was alive.

That felt like another life.

No, it *was* another life.

"Dream," Sam practically choked on the name this time. "—is your father."

Tommy's eyes widened. "He has a name?"

Sam grimaced. "Maybe just keep that a secret between you and me, huh?"

Tommy's eyes were still wide, but he nodded. "Okay."

Two days later, Sam heard much louder and much more frantic screaming from Tommy through the walls, and Sam practically electrocuted himself in the stress.

When Dream re-emerged from the cell and shut the door behind him with a click, as if that could hide Tommy's weak and desperate sobs, he slammed Sam into the wall so suddenly that Sam's breath left him.

"You've been visiting him," Dream said, his voice like rumbling thunder.

Sam knew it wouldn't do any good to deny it.

"He's lonely."

"Sam." Dream tilted his head. "You have two jobs under my service. Do you remember what they are?"

Sam forced himself to stay composed, even though he felt himself on the verge of a panic attack.

"I guard Tommy-Thomas's room and brew potions."

A dark smile twisted its way onto Dream's face. "I don't recall there anything being there about curing Thomas' loneliness."

There was so much more to it than that, but Dream was already twisting his wrist so violently that Sam could hear it crack.

Sam swallowed. Maybe Dream had a good reason for all of this.

Maybe Sam shouldn't have been such an idiotic fool who directly disobeyed Dream's orders.

"It won't happen again, sir," Sam whispered.

"You're right." Dream's voice promised nothing but pain. "It won't."

For the next few hours, the hallway was filled with Sam's screams as Dream made sure to hammer the lesson in.

And yet, despite the agony Sam had endured because of his visits to Tommy, Sam couldn't actually bring himself to stop.

For whatever reason, Dream didn't stop Sam from being the guard, and Sam wondered if he had even told the rest of his people about Tommy's existence. Surely, if everyone knew,

Dream would simply replace Sam and remove the risk of Sam doing exactly what he was doing right now.

“Tommy?” Sam whispered, carefully shutting the door behind him.

Tommy was curled up against the wall, whimpering. At Sam’s approach, he looked up and let out a somehow *more* anguished cry.

“I’m sorry!” He buried his face in his knees.

Sam crouched down in front of Tommy. “Why are you sorry?”

Tommy let out another sob, causing his entire body to shake. “You got hurt because of me,” he whispered, “You said to keep it a secret and now—“

Tommy didn’t finish, instead breaking into more sobs.

Sam shook his head. “It wasn’t your fault.”

He tried to hold Tommy’s shoulder comfortingly, but Tommy flinched away from the touch like it burned. Sam jerked his hand away, wincing at the pain in his new injuries at the sudden movement.

It didn’t hurt to see Tommy jerk away from him.

It did.

“I didn’t keep the secret,” Tommy whispered.

“That’s okay,” Sam said, “It’s not your fault. It was an accident. Accidents happen all the time, you don’t have to hate yourself for it.”

Tommy shook his head, clearly not believing him.

Sam couldn’t blame him.

It wasn’t until Tommy was eleven years old, and Sam was half way through his thirties that Sam finally had enough.

Because on one of Sam’s rare visits, Sam saw chains wrapped tightly around Tommy’s ankles and wrists.

And Sam saw *red*.

“What are these?” He asked somewhat harshly, staring down at the chains in rage filled horror.

Tommy shrunk away slightly. “They’re chains,” he said quietly, “I messed up.”

“So that gives him the right to—“

Sam cut himself off. No matter how angry he was, he couldn't talk badly of Dream, not after everything he had done.

Actually, what had Dream done? He had stolen a baby. He had made the baby believe he was some kind of monster. He had *hurt* Tommy, he had clipped his wings, he had treated him like some sort of pet.

Dream didn't deserve Sam's respect, not after everything he had done to the child that *Sam* had helped to raise, that *Sam* had sang him to sleep as a baby, that *Sam* had made laugh whenever he could.

*Sam* was the one who hugged Tommy on days it got too rough; *Sam* was the one who told Tommy everything he could about the outside world.

Tommy was more Sam's child than he was ever Dream's.

And Sam wasn't about to watch his child get hurt any longer.

“Sam?” Tommy asked hesitantly, his voice trembling slightly.

Sam gave Tommy a weak smile. “It's okay, Tommy,” he said, “Everything will be okay soon.”

Tommy would be safe, even if it was the last thing Sam did.

Sam waited for another one of Dream's visits to Tommy's cell to enact his plan.

“Go create some healing potions,” Dream ordered, “I'll collect you when I'm done.”

Sam bowed his head, gritting his teeth in a weak attempt to stop himself from punching Dream in the face.

“Of course, sir.”

It wasn't out of the usual for Dream to ask Sam to brew potions while he did whatever terrible thing he was planning with Tommy, and Sam wasn't startled or derailed by the request. As a matter of fact, he had been counting on it.

Sam jerkily turned away from Tommy's cell and down the dark corridor, his footsteps seeming louder than normal, the chill in his wings worse than usual.

Dream was going to *kill* him.

But maybe Sam, the old Sam, the Sam who made friends with Puffy all those years ago, was already dead, killed by dark stone halls and flickering torches.

Sam didn't particularly care. Tommy was the only thing that mattered.

Sam marched into his potions room, where vials were sitting comfortably in the shelf on the wall. Sam's journal, full of recipes and notes about Tommy's development sat on top of a box full of feathers Sam was supposed to use.

Sam went to the journal first, flipping through the pages. Failed recipes spanned a great many of the pages, and Sam knew many of the successful recipes by heart.

Sam paused when the pages started coming to Sam's notes on Tommy.

It was an entry on the first time Tommy had said Sam's name, beaming as he toddled toward him, reaching his hands out for a hug.

Sam stared at the scrawled words, his eyes burning as he pushed himself to remember how happy he had been that day.

But he had been scared too, because he knew how unhappy Dream would be with the new development.

Sam wanted to keep the journal for the entries on Tommy alone.

But he couldn't risk Dream keeping the information.

After a moment of deliberation, Sam grabbed hold of all the pages containing information on Tommy and pulled them out of the journal with a loud ripping of paper.

Sam carefully folded the papers and placed them in between two stones in the wall. Maybe he could come back for them later, but if he died, he didn't want Dream picking them off his corpse.

And with that, Sam held tightly onto his journal with both hands, staring at the worn cover of one of his only companions over the course of two decades.

He walked across the room and dropped it into the fireplace.

It took a moment, but soon the flames began eating up the journal, the only record of the secrets of potion making, the testament to Sam's failures and successes, and Sam watched as the flames devoured it into a shrivel and charred mess.

But Sam's work wasn't done.

He grabbed the glass vials off of the shelf and smashed them against the ground, allowing shards to scatter all over the room.

Sam winced. Maybe that was a bit over the top of him.

He scooped up the rest of the ingredients and dropped them into the fire, his resolve only hardening as he watched them all crumble into nothingness.



It was naïve to think that Dream hadn't recorded the potions recipes when Sam hadn't been there, but for now, Sam let himself hope.

Sam turned to the box of feathers and grabbed a handful of the ones that he knew would be the deadliest if he were to find himself in a fight against Dream. It was ludicrous to think he would win, but if there was one skill that had improved in his time with Dream, it was his fighting ability.

And Sam was ready to fight against the sun itself if it meant keeping Tommy safe.

Sam next went to the room where Dream stored all of the potions. Potions lined the walls, all being prepared for some war or something.

Dream didn't exactly explain his plans.

Sam stared at the potions before pulling a feather that Sam knew caused fires from a distance and crushed it in his palm.

Sam may have been the first to figure out how potions tick, but that didn't mean that they weren't some of the most dangerously volatile substances in existence.

After all, there was a reason Sam's father died all those years ago.

Funny, Sam couldn't even remember his face.

With a grim smile, Sam stared strait at the wooden shelf the potions were sitting on and snapped.

The wood instantly began burning away, and Sam only stayed to make sure that the potions were indeed beginning to boil.

Sam turned around just as the sound of wood breaking began.

He was two steps away from the room when there was a loud sound of destruction and a wave of searing heat knocked Sam forward.

Sam was on the ground.

His ears were ringing.

It was so hot, sweat was running down Sam's face like he had recently gotten wet.

Everything hurt.

Was he being punished?

No, he had destroyed the potions stash.

Now... now he had to save Tommy.

Sam forced his eyes open and he came face to face with the floor. Weakly, he tried to push himself up from the ground, looking up at the burning hall.

He had to save Tommy.

Someone was coming toward Sam, through the ringing of his ears, he could hear furious shouting.

Sam flinched away on impulse.

Dream was now right in front of him, grabbing Sam by the collar of his shirt. Sam tried to fight back, but his entire body felt like it had been filled with lead, and even moving his arm hurt more than it should.

But he had to save Tommy, even if his vision was fading and Sam felt his consciousness slipping.

He needed to—

When Sam woke up, he was in chains.

Dream was crouched in front of him, his face set in a frown.

What... what had happened?

Wait, Sam remembered. He was going to save Tommy, so he had destroyed all of the potions equipment so Dream couldn't use them in Sam's absence. He had gotten too close to the explosion, he supposed.

And now he was in chains. At Dream's mercy.

Maybe this had been stupid. Why would Sam have been as stupid as to betray Dream? After everything Dream had done for him?

And then the image of Tommy in chains came to the front of his mind, and all of that faded away.

"Oh Sam," Dream sighed, "Of all of the people I expected to betray me, you were not one of them."

Sam flinched, a chill running down his spine. "What do you mean?"

Dream laughed, grabbing Sam's chin. "Well, to put it simply, I thought I trained you better than that."

So, Dream had never cared about Sam either. Sam was just like Tommy, a weapon to be used to Dream's own ends.

It shouldn't have been a surprise, but Sam still felt betrayal burning in his chest all the same.

He pushed down the urge to be sick, instead opting to glare at Dream.

"Maybe," he bit out, "But that was before you hurt Tommy, you sick monster."

Dream tilted his head a moment, and then a wheezing laugh suddenly came out of him.

"You call him Tommy?" he asked, "That is *adorable*. Then again, you always were too kind for your own good."

Sam wanted nothing more than to smack that grin off of Dream's face, along with his creepy mask, but the chains were too tightly bound around him for him to do anything at all.

"Shut up," he growled.

Dream collected himself, sighing loudly as he got to his feet. "So you got attached to Thomas," he stated, his tone becoming toxic.

"You gave me a baby to raise; how could I not get attached?"

Dream didn't laugh this time. "So you've still been visiting him?"

"Of course."

There was no point in keeping the secrets now. Dream was probably going to have him killed either way.

"Well, I suppose there's only one way to handle this."

Dream's voice was in a growl as he reached down and grabbed Sam's chains.

Sam let out a startled gasp, but Dream didn't even look in his direction as he began dragging Sam to their destination.

They were halfway down the hall when Sam realized where they were going.

"No, you can't—"

"I can and I will," Dream snapped, turning around to face Sam again, "Besides, I'm being merciful. At least you'll see your beloved *Tommy* before you die."

How *dare* he? How dare he try to make Tommy kill Sam. That would destroy him.

That was probably the point.

Sam started screaming profanities at Dream, properly struggling against him, and eventually Dream gagged Sam right outside Tommy's door.

"Don't worry, Sam," Dream said, cupping Sam's face in his hand and wiping away some of the tears, "It'll all be over soon."

And then Dream slammed open the door and threw Sam inside.

Sam instantly searched the room for Tommy, and sure enough, there he was, scrambling to his feet with a clatter of chains. Clearly, Dream had not yet taken them off of Tommy, which made Sam only want to kill Dream all the more.

But if faced with the opportunity, Sam wasn't sure he'd have it within himself to do it.

But that wasn't the dilemma Sam was faced with. Instead, Tommy was faced with a much worse one.

"Sam?" Tommy had whispered, staring at Sam with wide eyes. He looked up at Dream, who had entered the room and shut the door behind him. "What's going on?"

Dream walked across the room, and petted Tommy's hair. "Thomas," Dream said, "You can have another preening soon. You just have to do one thing for me."

Horror dawned on Tommy's face. Sam understood. It didn't exactly take a genius to figure out what Dream was about to ask for.

And then the impossible came out of Tommy's mouth. "No."

It was shaking and quiet, but undeniable.

*No.*

Tommy had said *no*.

"No?" Dream asked, "You know the consequence of disobedience."

Tommy shuddered, curling in on himself.

"I'll kill you," Tommy whispered, and his face blanched when he realized what he had just said. He began shaking all the more as he stared at the floor. "I'll kill myself."

No, no, no Sam wanted to get Tommy safe, not *dead*.

Sam began to frantically shake his head, and Dream tightened his grip around Tommy's hair.

"You think I can die, Thomas?" he asked, the promise of pain once again in his words, "Because neither of us are dying tonight."

Tears were prominently coming down Tommy's face, and Sam's chest ached as he wanted nothing more than to pull Tommy close and promise him that everything would be okay.

"I'm sorry," Tommy whispered, "I'm sorry, please, I don't want to die, I don't want to kill him, please, why do I have to kill him?"

*It's not your fault*, Sam tried to convey with his eyes.

Tommy didn't see.

Dream brought his hand to Tommy's shoulder and squeezed. "He's a distraction," he said, "You have a destiny, and he's distracting you from it."

Sam didn't try to hide the surprise on his face. What *destiny*?

"He's my friend," Tommy begged, staring up at Dream with pleading eyes, "Please, Father, he's my friend."

"You don't need friends," Dream spat.

Both Sam and Tommy flinched as Dream pressed a black feather into Tommy's hand.

"I'm the only friend you need," Dream said, his voice softer now, "Now kill him."

Tommy's entire body was shaking, making the chains around his wrists rattle as he stared at Sam, terror in his eyes, swollen by tears.

Sam hoped he looked peaceful enough. He hoped Tommy would know that Sam didn't blame him for it.

Tommy crushed the feather. Sam vaguely wondered if it would hurt.

"Do it."

His hand shaking, Tommy brought it up.

*Straight up.*

Tommy's fingers brushed against the hand Dream had in Tommy's shoulder, and Dream toppled to the ground with an anticlimactic thump.

There was a shocked silence as both Sam and Tommy stared at Dream's body.

And then Tommy screamed.

Sam could only weakly attempt to shuffle forward as Tommy continued shrieking, staring at Dream's dead body like it was his own death.

"*Tommy,*" Sam tried to say, but he was still gagged.

He repeated himself, louder so that he could actually grab Tommy's attention.

Tommy stopped screaming and looked up at Sam, gasping for breath. His wings were shaking so violently that Sam was surprised that the feathers weren't actively falling off them.

Sam jiggled slightly, trying to convey that Tommy should ideally find some way to get the keys off of Dream.

Tommy tilted his head slightly, terrifyingly similar to Dream, his brow knit with confusion. Then, suddenly, his eyes lit up with understanding.

“You-you want me to undo the chains?” he asked weakly.

Sam nodded vigorously.

Tommy stared down at Dream’s body, letting out a horrified laugh. “I just-I just *killed* him,” he whispered, “I-I shouldn’t have done that.”

Urgency was still clutching at Sam’s chest. They might not have another opportunity to get away, and as much as he loved Tommy, now was not the time for a crisis.

He nodded his head back toward Dream, and Tommy jumped slightly.

“Right,” he whispered, “Chains.”

Tommy fortunately knew where the keys were on Dream’s belt, and Sam shuffled his way close enough to Tommy to undo the chains and gag.

“Thank you,” Sam gasped as soon as he was free, taking the keys from Tommy to undo Tommy’s chains.

Tommy was still shaking. “I killed him,” he whispered.

Sam stared at Dream’s body, but he still felt unsettled, as though something wasn’t right.

Or maybe it was just too easy.

So, while Tommy started crying again, Sam quickly snatched Dream’s feather pouch from his belt and grabbed a particularly heavy chain, clasping it around his ankle and the other end to a hook on the wall.

Sam sighed. He was probably being paranoid, but it was better safe than sorry, right?

“Alright,” he said, looking away from Dream and back toward Tommy, “Let’s—“

Sam was interrupted by the feeling of pressure in his abdomen, replaced by sudden *agonizing* pain.

Tommy was screaming again, pressing his back against the wall as though he had seen a ghost, and Sam snapped his head around, trying not to scream out from the pain.

Then, it took everything Sam had not to scream in terror.

Dream was currently pushing a knife into Sam’s stomach.

How was he *alive*? Did he have Puffy’s feathers still?

But there was no time to think about that now, because Tommy was in danger.

Unthinkingly, Sam dropped the bag of feathers to the ground, wrenched the knife from Dream’s hold, and yanked the weapon out of his stomach, instead stabbing Dream in the chest.

As Dream sputtered and choked, grappling with the knife, Sam was already sprinting across the room and picking Tommy up, stumbling out of the room and down the hall.

He realized too late that he had left the feathers behind.

Maybe Sam should be more concerned that he was just stabbed. But as it was, Sam was just praying that he could manage to get Tommy out before he collapsed.

Tommy was screaming again, which wasn't exactly good for their cover. Still, as Sam scrambled up the stairs, pushing one of Dream's goons out of the way, he was pretty sure that Tommy was pressing his hands against the stab wound, buying Sam precious time.

Sam was beginning to feel way colder than usual when he finally rounded the corner on the way to the potion storage room.

And there, bathed in holy sunlight, Sam saw a small hole in the side of the mountain where the potion room once stood.

Unfortunately, a guard was blocking it.

Sam was feeling the last of his adrenaline fade, but he couldn't fail, not when they were so close to the exit.

So Sam did something he might've hated himself for at any other time.

He took grabbed one of the loose feathers from Tommy's wing and crushed it, slamming his hand into the guard before they could even lift a sword.

And then it was all over.

For both of them.

There, right where Sam could see blinding sunlight for the first time in *years*, Sam collapsed, nearly crushing Tommy.

The pain was like a burning acid spreading from the wound, and Sam tried to bring his hands do it even as he felt himself grow weaker and weaker.

Tommy had managed to wriggle his way out from underneath Sam, and he helped Sam roll over onto his back.

Sam smiled, at least he could see Tommy's face this way, even if they were stained with tears.

He shivered when another bout of cold hit him.

There was no denying it.

Sam was dying.

And he was running very low on time.

“Come on,” Tommy begged, “We’re almost there, we can—“

Sam smiled, bringing a trembling and bloody hand up to cup Tommy’s face.

“It’s okay,” Sam whispered, “I love you so much, baby.”

That only served to make Tommy break down into yet more tears, and he pressed his hands back down on Sam’s wound. “Please, please, please, it’s right there! Sam!”

Sam’s vision was fading. It was getting harder to breathe.

“You have—“ He gasped painfully. “—to leave.”

“But—“

“It’s time for you to be free now,” Sam whispered, his hand falling limp to his side as he could hardly see Tommy at all, “Go.”

Sam was lying on something soft.

Nothing hurt, strangely enough. As a matter of fact, Sam felt more comfortable than he had ever had in his life.

It was strange.

Sam knew that he should probably get up and look at his surroundings, but he felt so relaxed that he kind of wanted to just lie there on the ground for the rest of his life.

Someone was gently running their fingers through Sam’s hair, but it didn’t feel like Dream. The touch was softer. Kinder.

“Oh darling,” a strangely familiar voice said gently, “You did so, so well.”

Slowly, Sam forced his eyes open.

A very familiar looking woman was smiling sadly down at him, but Sam didn’t care about that.

He cared more about the blue expanse above him.

The *sky*.

“Look,” Sam said, smiling as he tried to ignore his tears, “the sky.”

The woman looked up for a moment before returning her attention back to Sam.

“Do you know where we are?” she asked softly.



Sam tried to collect his memories, still staring up at the expansive sky in awe. He was trying to escape, right? And then Dream had stabbed him. Sam was losing consciousness right at their exit.

It didn't exactly take a genius to figure out what happened.

Besides, Sam's life had never been so peaceful.

"I'm dead?"

The woman nodded. "I'm sorry."

Sam swallowed and sat up, realizing he was sitting in a field. He missed fields. He missed the green grass and cool breeze.

"Did Tommy make it out?"

The woman's smile widened, and Sam saw tears in *her* eyes for whatever reason.

"Yes, he did."

And as overwhelming relief crushed Sam, soft arms pulled him into a warm embrace.

Sam stiffened slightly, confused, but then the woman began gently preening his wings, and Sam melted into the hug.

"Thank you," the woman whispered, "thank you for saving my child."

Sam's heart skipped a beat.

"Your child?" he echoed.

This was Tommy's mother?

Tommy's mother let out a soft laugh. "You don't recognize me, do you?"

Sam frowned, backing away from the hug slightly to get a better look at the woman.

And then it clicked.

Sam felt as though every bone had been electrified with terror as he quickly pulled himself out of the hug and put himself in a low bow in the way that Dream would sometimes like.

"My queen," Sam gasped, trying not to let panic overcome him, "I'm so sorry."

Sam could hardly believe it. Tommy was the queen's child. Tommy was *royalty*.

Hands rested on Sam's shoulders, and Sam braced himself.

But there was no sudden bout of pain, and the hold didn't tighten.

Instead, the queen gently lead Sam out of the bow and back into a normal seated position.

“Don’t apologize,” she said, her voice still incredibly kind, “It wasn’t your fault.”

A lump rose to Sam’s throat. “I did nothing,” he said bitterly, “He was torturing him and I did nothing.”

“He was torturing you as well.”

It was as though the entire world stopped.

Dream had only punished him. It wasn’t—

Oh who was he kidding, his punishment *was* torture.

“But I still did nothing,” Sam insisted, “I loved him, and I still did nothing.”

“No,” the queen said in a soft voice, “Loving him isn’t nothing, visiting him at your own risk isn’t nothing, dying so that he could escape isn’t nothing.”

“It wasn’t enough,” Sam insisted, “I should’ve done it sooner; I should’ve taken him as a baby and *ran*—“

The queen shushed him gently. “It wasn’t your fault,” she said, “The fact that you took courage when you did is miracle enough, and for that, I will be forever grateful.”

Sam was crying again. He felt ridiculous for it. He was a grown man, and he was crying like a child who scraped their knee.

But the queen only smiled graciously and hugged Sam again, massaging his back the same way Sam used to massage Tommy’s.

It was strange to be the one being comforted.

“I’m sorry,” Sam whispered again.

“It’s alright,” the queen said, “It wasn’t your fault.”

Sam stopped arguing.

After a little while of just allowing himself to be hugged for the first time in years, Sam finally gathered enough of himself to ask a few questions.

“Where are my parents?”

The queen smiled. “They’re waiting for you,” she said, “But there’s one thing you’re allowed to do before you go there.”

Sam frowned. What thing?

The queen gave him a knowing look. “When someone sacrifices themselves for a sake of another, they are allowed to choose someone to visit once, just to tie off loose ends. It’s called the final request.”

Sam frowned. Had he learned about that in school before? Or was it like the power white wings, known only to a few? “That sounds like something from a myth.”

“You would know better than anyone the truth myths hold.”

Well that would be fair enough.

Sam took a deep breath, his heart beating all the more rapidly as he realized the implications.

“So I can visit Tommy?” he whispered.

The queen nodded. “Whenever you’re ready.”

There was a strange possessive feeling that came with knowing one had one chance to do something, and Sam felt the urge to hold onto his one time to speak to Tommy for as long as possible. Every day, he’d watch Tommy travel in fear, and he had to hold back the urge to use his shot to comfort him, reminding himself that there would be another time, a better time. Not to mention Sam could only visit Tommy while he was asleep.

It wasn’t until Tommy tried to kill Phil, his own father, that Sam knew his time had come.

He shut his eyes and took a deep breath.

One more time.

Sam found himself in a sunlit forest, and he saw Tommy leaning against the tree identical to the one he had fallen asleep on.

Tommy was looking up at him, and suddenly he was jumping to his feet, sprinting toward Sam.

“Sam!”

Sam’s chest grew warm at hearing Tommy call out his name, and he held his arms out for a hug. Tommy *leapt* into it, causing Sam to stumble backward slightly.

Sam hugged Tommy more closely to himself than he had when he scooped the boy up and ran away from Dream.

This was Sam’s last chance to give Tommy a good hug, and he wasn’t about to waste it.

“Sam,” Tommy whispered, beginning to sob into Sam’s chest., “Sam.”

“Tommy,” Sam whispered. Seeing Tommy cry like that made his chest ache, and he began combing his fingers through Tommy’s hair in an attempt at comfort. “It’s alright. It’s alright, baby. I’m here.”

“I thought—I thought you were dead,” Tommy whispered, his voice choked, “I saw you die!”

“I know.” Sam began rocking Tommy back and forth like he used to when Tommy was much, much smaller.

“You left me!” Tommy screamed, “You said you wouldn’t leave me!”

Sam flinched, guilt pooling in his stomach.

“I know.”

“Please—“ Sam rubbed circles into Tommy’s back. “Please don’t leave me again.”

Sam would give anything to be able to say that he could stay, that they could forge a new life together, that Sam would always be there to give Tommy at least the smallest amount of comfort.

But Sam was dead, and Tommy had other people he could learn to rely on now.

“I’m so sorry.”

Tommy’s head snapped up to face Sam, horror on his face.

“Sam?” Tommy whispered, “What do you mean?”

Sam was crying again, but he only cared about Tommy’s tears, and he gently brushed them away. “I’m so sorry,” Sam whispered, “But I’m still dead.”

“But you’re right here,” Tommy whispered, “Sam, you’re right here.”

Sam gave Tommy a small smile. “My final request was to see you again.”

Tommy still looked confused. Sam didn’t completely understand it himself. “I don’t understand.”

“It’s alright, Tommy,” Sam said softly, “It’s going to be alright.”

“No, it’s *not*,” Tommy gasped, “You’re dead, you were supposed to stay, Sam, why can’t you stay?” Tommy’s sobs were getting worse, and Sam panicked as Tommy collapsed to his knees. “*Please.*”

Sam instantly moved down to his own knees, gently bringing Tommy’s face in his hands, staring in Tommy’s beautiful blue eyes for possibly the last time until Tommy died.

Sam didn’t want to go, but he had no choice. He might as well comfort his child while he was at it.

“Listen to me,” Sam said, “It’s not your fault.”

“Yes, it is!” Tommy’s voice became a high pitched scream. “I could’ve saved you, I should’ve been *good*—”

Rage toward Dream burned in Sam’s veins, but he forced it back. Tommy didn’t need his anger. Tommy needed love in this moment.

“Repeat after me, baby, can you do that?” Sam asked.

Tommy nodded.

“Great.”

Sam took a deep breath. He was saying this for Tommy.

But maybe it was true for himself as well.

“It’s not my fault.”

It wasn’t Sam’s fault that Dream manipulated him. It wasn’t Sam’s fault that Dream hurt Tommy.

Or, at least, that’s what the queen liked saying.

Tommy echoed the words.

“I am a good person.”

Sam wasn’t a good person. How could he be when he let a child suffer for so long?

But the queen seemed to think Sam was a good person, and Sam *knew* that Tommy was a good person, so he said it for them.

Tommy’s sobs became more anguished as he shook his head.

“Tommy,” Sam said, trying to hide how painful it was to see Tommy like this, “Say it with me: I am a good person.”

Maybe... just maybe... Sam was a good person too.

“I can’t, I can’t, I can’t!”

Sam felt his heart break as Tommy rejected something that was so obviously true.

“Okay.” Sam hugged Tommy close again, preening Tommy’s feathers. “I’ll do it for you then.”

Tommy was shaking his head more, and Sam was crying again.

“You are a good person,” Sam whispered, “You are a good person forced to do bad things, but that doesn’t make you any less a victim to the person who did this to you.”

Maybe Sam could believe it for himself.

And if Sam could believe it, he knew Tommy could come to believe it as well.

“But—”

“You are not to blame for my being stabbed through the stomach,” Sam interrupted, “You are a good person, Tommy, and this isn’t your fault.”

“You’re wrong.”

Sam ran his fingers through Tommy’s hair, as if that could convince him of the truth.. “It’s okay,” Sam whispered, “You’ll understand one day.”

Sam prayed that Tommy would understand.

“I’m running out of time,” Sam said quietly, feeling himself begin to be pulled away, “Can you trust me on this one thing Tommy?”

Tommy looked as though it took him great effort to nod.

“Trust Phil,” Sam said, “I know you don’t trust him, but try. *Please.*”

“But he’s dangerous,” Tommy protested weakly.

Sam knew that Tommy couldn’t be more wrong. He had seen the way Philza looked at Tommy. Phil loved Tommy more than the stars themselves.

“He *loves you*, Tommy,” Sam insisted, “He loves you more than you could possibly comprehend, and he would never hurt you.”

“I’ll—I’ll try,” Tommy whispered. He looked up at Sam, who couldn’t be more overjoyed at the words.. “Please, please don’t leave me.”

And Sam’s heart broke again.

“We’ll see each other again.” Sam pressed a kiss on Tommy’s hair, “Hopefully not for many years.”

“No, no, no!” Tommy wrapped his arms around Sam’s neck, clearly trying to stop him from leaving.

Sam didn’t want to leave Tommy behind, not when he was like this, not when he was so heartbroken.

“I love you, Tommy.” Sam smiled. “It’s going to be okay.”

And then it was over, and Sam was sitting next to the queen, tears pouring down his face.

The queen grabbed Sam's hand and squeezed it.

"Thank you," she whispered again, "Are you ready to go?"

Sam swallowed and nodded. He missed his parents. He'd like to see them again.

"Yeah," he whispered, "Let's go."

He knew Tommy would be okay. Eventually.

And when Tommy's time came, Sam would be there waiting for him.

## Chapter End Notes

I've been at camp but I've been working on this on my phone. 11k words of this interlude was written with my fingers on a phone, therefore there are probably typos, although I did try to find some. (My favorite being cruises instead of bruises)

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed, please comment because I love to hear from you guys, just be nice lol, and thank you for reading. <333

(Also I will explain how potions work later)

## Chapter 20

### Chapter Summary

Tubbo is suffering from watching his friend suffer.

Wilbur is suffering because he refuses to admit he's suffering.

Yay <3

### Chapter Notes

tw: referenced death, grief, anger, self-loathing, referenced amputation, trauma, ptsd, implied/referenced child abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

## Chapter 20

Tommy was crying.

Tommy was crying, and Tubbo didn't know why.

Tubbo hoped it wasn't anything he did. He didn't think so, though, considering that Tommy had just woken up before crying all over the place.

Carefully, Tubbo wrapped his arms around Tommy and pulled him into a hug. Tommy didn't jerk himself away, instead clinging onto Tubbo as he continued to cry.

Schlatt was coming over to them, and Tubbo smiled gratefully. Schlatt would know what to say. And while Tubbo wasn't *horrible* at these sorts of situations, he much preferred his father to do all the serious talking.

The royal family was also waking up, Wilbur even saying Tommy's name out loud in a panic, and Tubbo wondered if the prince had just experienced a nightmare of his own.

Tubbo had a nightmare. He dreamt that everyone had died because he had been a hostage. It wasn't a very good dream.

Schlatt crouched down next to Tommy and Tubbo's little nest, using his wings to block the royals from view. "Tommy, kid?" Schlatt asked quietly, resting a hand on Tommy's back. "What's wrong? Are you hurt?"



Tommy shook his head, clinging onto Tubbo so tightly that it hurt a little bit, not that Tubbo would ever say it out loud.

“Did you have a nightmare?” Tubbo asked quietly.

Tommy stilled slightly, sobs still shaking his body, but he shook his head. “It wasn’t—it wasn’t—”

“That’s okay,” Schlatt said soothingly, shushing Tommy gently in the same way he would whenever Tubbo cried on top of him, “take your time.”

“He’s dead,” Tommy whispered quietly, ducking his head down so that Tubbo could only really see his messy hair.

Who was dead? Tubbo glanced up at his father’s face in confusion, and Schlatt seemed to be wearing a similarly perplexed expression.

Then, Tubbo suddenly remembered the story Dream had told Puffy. The one about that guy named Sam. Apparently, he had died? Was that who Tommy was talking about?

“Who’s dead?” Schlatt asked gently.

“He is,” Tommy sobbed, which wasn’t very informative, “He’s gone!”

Tubbo swallowed, unsure of what to say. “I’m sorry—”

Tommy interrupted him with a broken laugh. “You’re not sorry,” he whispered.

Tubbo stiffened, his wings instantly curling in behind him. Memories of bullies instantly began playing in Tubbo’s mind, which was so *stupid*, because Tommy wasn’t a bully, and yet Tubbo couldn’t get it out of his head, and it made him lose some of his breath.

“What?” Tubbo whispered, his voice trembling.

Tommy let go of Tubbo, jumping to his feet so suddenly that Tubbo let out a startled yelp.

“You’re not sorry,” he said again, scowling down at both Tubbo and Schlatt, “You didn’t even know him!”

Tubbo didn’t know what to say, so he didn’t say anything, not entirely sure he’d have the strength to pull himself to his feet. This just seemed so entirely out of character for Tommy, who was afraid to shout, who was afraid to do anything wrong to upset anybody unless he thought he was in immediate danger.

And seeing him riled up now, which should be a *good thing*, Tubbo couldn’t help but to want the quiet Tommy back. Anything would be better than the anger in Tommy’s eyes directed in Tubbo’s direction.

And then hot shame filled Tubbo’s stomach. How horrible of a friend, how horrible of a *person* did he have to be to think like that? He should be glad that Tommy was standing up

for himself. He should be glad that Tommy felt safe enough to yell.

Shaking in a jumbled mess of emotions, Tubbo looked up at his dad, who had pulled himself to his feet, unlike Tubbo, who's hands were still pressed firmly against the one of the coarse blankets of their nest.

"You're right," Schlatt said calmly, "We didn't know him. But—"

"You can't say anything," Tommy snapped, his wings flaring up slightly as he took a step away from Schlatt, "You didn't know him, and you'll never know him, because I loved him, and now he's *gone*!"

There was a ringing silence, and even Tommy seemed to be dead still for a moment as the words crashed over everyone.

"Tommy," Prince Wilbur said softly, "it wasn't your fault."

Tommy took another step back. "You weren't there," Tommy snapped, "If I hadn't—if he had \_\_\_"

Tommy interrupted himself with more hiccupping sobs, and Tubbo finally jumped to his feet, moving to hug Tommy again or *something*, because that was all Tubbo knew how to do in this sort of situation.

Tommy shuffled back, pressing himself against a tree.

"Stay away," he hissed, causing Tubbo to recoil back toward his dad, "You can't... you can't... you don't *understand*."

"Then help us understand," Prince Technoblade rumbled, his voice only slightly louder than Wilbur's, "We want to help you."

"I don't want your help," Tommy snapped, although his voice was turning into a desperate whine, "I want *Sam*."

"Sam?" King Philza asked, his voice louder and much more startled than the others.

Tommy glared at Philza, clearly still not fully trusting of the man. Tubbo wasn't sure why he'd expect otherwise. Tommy had seemed fairly certain that Philza was out to kill him earlier, and it was a miracle that Tommy hadn't made a run for it again.

"Don't say his name," Tommy whispered, "You don't—you don't get to do that."

"We won't say his name," Schlatt said quickly, "But kid, we just want to help you."

"You shouldn't." Tommy began shaking his head back and forth rapidly, pressing himself further against the tree, "You shouldn't, you shouldn't. You should all leave. You should all stay away from me."

But why? Why was Tommy so insistent on refusing their love/ Tubbo just wanted to *help* him.

Tommy began sinking to the ground, his breathing getting quicker and quicker, and Tubbo quickly realized what was happening. Everyone instantly rushed over to Tommy, and together they helped him out of his panic attack.

After Tommy's breathing had returned to normal, Tommy became very still, his black wings tucked perfectly behind him as he sat on his knees, on which his hands were curled up into fists.

"Tommy?" Tubbo whispered.

Tommy flinched, but apart from that, he didn't move at all. Not even his feathers moved more out of place at being addressed.

It was somewhat terrifying.

"Dad?" Tubbo whispered instead, glancing up at Schlatt, who was frowning.

"Everyone back up a little bit," Schlatt commanded.

Tubbo quickly did as he was told, and Prince Technoblade helped Prince Wilbur to take a step backwards.

"Hey, Tommy?" Schlatt said softly, not moving to touch Tommy, "Can you hear me?"

Tommy didn't say anything.

"You don't have to talk." Schlatt's voice was still gentle, and Tubbo felt *himself* relaxing somewhat. "Just nod if you can hear me, alright kid?"

Tubbo held his breath. At first, Tommy didn't move. Then, he gave a brief, barely perceptible nod.

Tubbo released his breath.

"Okay," Schlatt said, smiling slightly, "You're doing great. Alright, so first things first, you're not in trouble. You're not going to get punished. Okay?"

"You're lying," Tommy whispered, not taking his eyes off the ground.

"I promise I'm not. And even if you were in trouble, which you're *not*, we wouldn't hurt you."

Tommy nodded, but it looked forced.

"You're allowed to be angry," Schlatt continued, "And while I'd obviously don't want you to direct your anger at Tubbo, you're not in trouble for it. You're allowed to be grieving."

Tommy didn't nod this time, and Tubbo felt anxiety knot at his chest.

"And listen, kid," Schlatt sighed. "You're not a burden. You aren't a curse. None of this is your fault."

"That's not true," Tommy said quietly, "I'm a monster. I only ever get people hurt."

"You're not a monster," King Philza said suddenly, his voice sounding like he was badly hurt, "You're a child."

Tommy shook his head. "Please," he whispered, "Please leave me."

"But—" Tubbo's voice caught on his throat. "—you're my friend."

Tommy finally looked up from the ground, and Tubbo saw that tears were still streaming steadily down his face.

"That's what I'm afraid of."

Wilbur was fractured.

Dream was right. He really *had* broken Wilbur, just not in the way that Dream had thought.

His baby brother was so fragile. He was so scared. Wilbur wanted to hug him. He wanted to hold him and never let go like he had done a few nights before, but Wilbur was terrified of scaring him away. Wilbur didn't want to lose him, not again.

Tommy still thought of himself as a monster. Tommy still believed that he hurt everyone he came across, directly or indirectly.

And suddenly, Wilbur hated himself. He hated that he couldn't have done more. He hated that he hadn't been able to ward Dream off a little longer before Techno had come to help. He hated that he had let that green monster rip one of his wings off, only reinforcing Tommy's horrific worldview.

Tommy had asked them to leave, looking so small, his wings tucked behind him and his back hunched in a way to make him look even *smaller* than he already was.

Wilbur wanted to kill Dream. He wanted to march down to wherever his secret base was and destroy it all. He wanted to cause explosions so damn catastrophic that they could be seen all the way from the capital. Wilbur wanted... Wilbur wanted...

Prime, Wilbur just wanted to hug his brother.

"We're not leaving," Wilbur whispered instead, his voice wobbling as he leaned against Techno, "Tommy, you're not a curse. You're the most wonderful blessing we could ever ask for."

Tommy shook his head. “No, I’m not.”

“Yes, you are.”

“I’m not,” Tommy whispered, straightening from his hunched position, which was a bit of a relief, “I’m not going to let you believe what isn’t true. You need to *leave*.”

“Why—” Techno tried.

“I can’t lose you too!” Tommy shouted.

He froze, as if he had just admitted some horrific truth, and suddenly he burst into more tears.

Needless to say, they hadn’t left. Instead, they had given Tommy an abundance of blankets, letting him cry it out as they whispered assurances.

Tommy probably didn’t believe most of them, but Wilbur held onto the hope that he would believe at least one.

The next morning was a quiet affair, and after a quick breakfast of some apples, everyone quickly turned each other for preening.

Tommy, Schlatt, and Tubbo had made a small preening circle. Tubbo was preening Tommy’s wings while preened Schlatt’s, who was preening Tubbo’s. Tommy looked somewhat uncomfortable for whatever reason. Wilbur half wondered if he should make sure that everything was alright, but then he recalled that Tommy had seemed awkward about preening before. From the state of Tommy’s wings, Wilbur wouldn’t be surprised if they weren’t preened as often as everyone else’s.

Tommy’s discomfort paired with his quietness from last night only made Wilbur long to hug him more.

Instead, Phil, Wilbur, and Technoblade formed their own circle. Wilbur was in charge of smoothing Technoblade’s pink feathers into place while Phil worked on Wilbur’s wing.

Wilbur tried not to shudder as Phil gently worked his fingers in Wilbur’s feathers, gently making them hook together properly. Still, a chill ran down Wilbur’s spine as he remembered Dream’s fingers in his feathers, in his hair, crooning those sickly-sweet words...

*“Are you scared little prince? Are you scared of losing your precious feathers?”*

Wilbur flinched, his wing jerking away from Phil’s hands involuntarily.

“Wil?” Phil asked quietly.

“It’s nothing,” Wilbur muttered, moving his wing back to Phil’s hands, “Sorry.”

Phil continued preening. “You know...” he said slowly, “You can tell me anything, right?”

Wilbur rolled his eyes. “I know, Dad, but I’m fine, okay?”

Phil didn’t push it, much to Wilbur’s relief, although Techno did shoot him a skeptical look. Wilbur glared back at him.

After they finished preening, they quickly cleaned up the camp and continued their journey. Wilbur wasn’t surprised when Tommy stuck closer to Schlatt and Tubbo, although he wouldn’t deny that it didn’t hurt a little.

On a slightly brighter note, Wilbur was getting better at adjusting to the uncomfortable wait his remaining wing left behind, making it much easier for them to make good progress.

The sun was about half-way down the sky when Tubbo perked up, pointing in the distance.

“Look!” he cheered, “A house!”

Wilbur looked closely in the direction Tubbo was pointing, and sure enough, there was a small house hidden behind an unusually thick bit of trees.

“And?” Techno had asked tiredly, “We can’t exactly invade other people’s property.”

“We could ask for lodging,” Tubbo pointed out.

“No,” Tommy said, his voice raspy. It was probably one of the first things he had said all day. “We can’t.”

Wilbur pursed his lips together. He knew that Tommy was talking about how unreceptive the owners of the house would probably be to his wings.

“Why don’t Techno and I check it out?” Phil offered, “At the very least, we can ask for supplies.”

It was a good plan, although Wilbur had one small objection to it.

“I’m going to,” he said. The others frowned, and Wilbur scowled. “Don’t look at me like that. I’m fine. Besides, we can farm their pity for more help.”

“Wilbur, I’m the king—”

“Let him go,” Techno interrupted, giving Wilbur an understanding look, “What’s it going to hurt?”

Wilbur relaxed slightly, smiling at Technoblade, and Phil sighed, the tension in his own wings receding. “You’re right,” he conceded, “Of course you can come along, Wil.”

Wilbur grinned, and he turned to Tommy. “We’ll be back,” he promised.

Tommy only looked away.

And with that, the three of them headed toward the house, maneuvering through the thick layer of trees to reach a small clearing the house was hidden in.

All things considered, the house was pretty nice. Sun filled the clearing, and Wilbur could see a garden full of fruits and vegetables, and alliums surrounded the wood cottage they were headed toward.

Technoblade reached the front door first, Phil and Wilbur trailing behind ever so slightly, and he knocked on the door with the rapid sound of his fist against the wood.

At first, there was silence, and Wilbur wondered if there was anyone home at all. But surely *someone* had to be there? Even if this house was admittedly farther off from a town than most would prefer, the garden looked far too managed to have no one there to take care of it.

Confirming Wilbur's suspicions, the door knob suddenly started rattling, and the door swung open.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

Phil let out an audible gasp, and Wilbur himself started at the person standing in front of them.

A dual-winged child looking to be about Tommy's age was holding a black feather in his hand, his black and white wings shaking behind him. He was glaring at Phil like he was personally offended by his presence.

Wilbur managed a small grin. At least they wouldn't have to be worried about Tommy.

## Chapter End Notes

Tommy feels safe enough to move onto the anger stage of grief! Victory!

Now we need Wilbur to do the same.

Oh look Ranboo's here too.

Who knows what Dream's up to these days. We should probably check in on him soon.

Ooooo maybe i'll check on niki instead that's fun.

Alright, please comment if you want to encourage me to update sooner rather than later b/c y'all's comments are wonderful and I have many wips. <3

Anyway, thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoyed! <3

-Sam is having a wonderful time in the afterlife right now. Just so you know.





# Chapter 21

## Chapter Summary

Phil talks to Ranboo.

Niki didn't sign up to be a part of this angsty fanfic but she's here anyway so suffer.

## Chapter Notes

tw: fantasy racism, referenced kidnapping, referenced death, omission of truth, referenced execution, past traitor, ummmm honestly this chapter is surprisingly not bad with trigger warnings

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There was a dual winged child standing in front of Phil. He held a black feather like it was a lifeline, and he was staring at them all with terror.

He was probably Tommy's age, although maybe a little older, considering his height.

Phil tried not to think about another dual winged individual he had worked with in the past. His name was Karl, and his purple and blue wings held power that Philza would never know.

All he had known at the time was that two feathers from both wings brought together would give birth to an impossible feat, and at the time, Phil had needed an impossible feat.

Nine years later, Phil had tried again, desperately searching for anyone with dual wings who could help the search for Thomas. No one was found. Those with two different color wings were astoundingly rare, and those that did exist often went into hiding, out of fear for being used for their power.

And understandably so.

Now, Phil was facing one himself, and he was not at all surprised to see why this child was so well hidden, why they had only come across him through pure dumb luck.

Having dual wings was bad enough, having black *and* white wings on top of it? That was all but a death sentence.

Especially when rumors of Dream's presence had likely been spreading around the time of the poor child's birth.

Phil put on a gentle smile, hoping that it would be enough to calm the kid down. “Hey, mate,” he said, “We’re not going to hurt you.”

The kid laughed, sounding mildly hysterical. “Yeah right.”

They were overwhelming him, that much was obvious.

Philza turned to Wilbur and Technoblade. “You two go back to the others,” Phil said, “I’ll talk to him.”

Wilbur frowned, looking ready to protest, but Technoblade simply sighed and said, “Come on, Wil.”

Wilbur looked between Phil and the kid a few times, opening and closing his mouth as though he were seriously considering arguing before he finally wilted.

“Fine,” he muttered, and together the boys walked back to where Tommy, Tubbo, and Schlatt were waiting for them.

Now Phil and the kid were alone, and the kid looked only marginally relaxed, staring at Phil with suspicion.

“I’m not going to hurt you,” Phil said again, holding his hands out to show he wasn’t holding any weapons or feathers.

“Don’t lie to me,” the kid said, his voice shaking now, “Don’t.”

“I’m not lying, mate.” Phil smiled gently. “And even if I did want to hurt you, you’d probably be able to kill me before I go very far, isn’t that right?”

The kid frowned. “You could knock me out,” he said, “You could pin me to the ground and make it so that I can’t use my hands to reach you, you could burn my hands, you could dodge enough times that—”

The kid cut himself off, glancing away. Phil could only feel concerned on how well rehearsed this child seemed in the ways potential kidnappers could stop him from killing them.

“I promise I won’t do any of those things,” Phil said, “Let’s try again. I’m King Philza of the Antarctic Empire. What’s your name?”

The kid hesitated. “Ranboo,” he eventually said, glancing up at Philza with wide eyes, “Are you really the king?”

Philza nodded.

“Is it true that Dream’s afraid of you?”

Philza’s smile slid off his face. “I don’t know mate,” he admitted, “Dream has always seemed to hate me more than most, though, yes.”

Ranboo looked more hesitant, and he lowered the feather. “My dad said you were nice,” he admitted, “He said you helped him, once.”

Phil had helped many people in the past. “Is your dad here now?” he asked.

Chances are, if the kid was answering the door and he was acting like he was the sole protector of his own survival, the answer was no. However, one could always hope that there was a parent waiting in that house, at least so that Phil could punch them in the face and tell them to do better.

Ranboo shook his head. “He died,” he said quietly, “Two years ago.”

Phil’s eyes widened. Two years was a long time.

“So, you’re alone?” he asked, “Nobody visits?”

Ranboo frowned, but he shook his head again, his heterochromatic hair bouncing back and forth. “Except for, you know, the bad people.”

Unfortunately, Phil did know, and he hated it. He remembered how paranoid Karl had been about letting Phil and Puffy into his home. Phil remembered seeing the scars on Karl’s face as he explained briefly that life had taught him to trust no one.

And Phil would never forget the bodies that had awaited him after it was all done, only one missing from the dead.

At first, Phil had been hopeful that Sam had listened and hid as soon as Dream and his lackeys had come into view.

However, after the search went from hours, to days, to weeks, to months, a full year of searching came to an end, and Sam was declared dead. Phil remembered spending the weeks leading up to the funeral thrusting himself into his work, trying to forget the still somewhat baby-faced boy begging to be there to support his friend.

His mind had surged through various what-ifs. What if they had finished sooner? What if Karl had allowed Sam into his home? What if Phil had just flat out told him to stay at the palace? What if they had managed to beat Dream? What if they had managed to root out the traitor sooner?

It was only after Thomas was kidnapped that they had successfully found the traitor in their ranks, as he was the one to distract the most guards away from the window to Thomas’s bedroom.

After questioning for hours in front of the entire court, there was one thing that the man said that cemented into Phil’s mind.

“Oh, I remember that green-winged kid,” he had said, sounding like he was recalling a vague memory, “He was led down to hell.”

“Hell?” Philza had asked, fury in his voice.

The man nodded, looking completely uncaring. “It’s what we call the lower levels. It’s hell because, well, not only is it dark and stifling, not a window in sight, but everybody knows that being sent down there is a death sentence.”

The reminder of one of Phil’s greatest failures mixed with the searing and fresh wound of Thomas’s loss caused Phil to call for a vote for the man’s execution.

He was executed a week later.

But that was in the past, and Phil was in the present, tasked with the responsibility of comforting this very clearly frightened kid.

“We’re not one of the bad people,” Phil assured Ranboo, keeping his voice as gentle and welcoming as possible, “As a matter of fact, we can leave right now.”

“Yeah?” Ranboo asked, “You’d... just leave?”

“I’d just leave,” Phil promised him, “I wouldn’t tell anyone that you were here, and you could continue living in peace.”

Ranboo let out a shaky laugh, and flexed his wings, wearing an anxious expression. “Do you actually need my help?” he asked nervously.

Philza was now faced with a choice. He could tell this poor kid the truth, that they were on the run back to the capital, and really could use a place to stay, as well as some supplies. He could tell Ranboo half the truth, agree that they needed help and not explain that Dream was possibly trying to chase them down.

Unfortunately, both of those options would likely make Ranboo feel morally obligated to help, which was not... ideal.

Phil could say that there wasn’t any need, and that they could just as easily find somewhere else.

But Ranboo’s help truly was their best bet.

“I’m sorry, mate,” Phil said, “But we really do need the supplies and a few nights to make something for my son to stand better.”

Phil knew that omitting the part about Dream was cowardly, but what Ranboo didn’t know couldn’t hurt him. Worst came to worst, Phil would ward Dream off while Ranboo and the others ran far away from this place.

Phil hoped it wouldn’t come to that.

Ranboo glanced in the direction Wilbur and Techno had left nervously. “Just for a few days?”

“Only for a few days,” Phil confirmed, smiling and pretending not to feel the potential danger he could be putting this child in.

Ranboo took a deep breath, and he arched his back, making himself even taller than he had seemed before. “Okay,” he said, “You can stay for a few days.”

Phil grinned. “Thank you so much, mate.”

“It’s, ah—” Ranboo gave Phil a wobbly grin. “It’s no problem.”

Something was wrong.

Niki had lived in the capital her entire life. She’d walked the busy streets and flown through the equally busy skies. She’d been in the palace gardens and she’d visited the slums.

She had witnessed the summer festivals, and she had been there when rumors of Dream’s presence had run rampant and Prince Thomas had been taken and killed.

But never had Niki ever felt such a pervading feeling of doom that had descended on the city, especially in the upper districts.

Niki wasn’t nobility. Her parents ran a highly reputable bakery that garnered a lot of noble attention, and so Niki had found herself a serving girl at many parties. As the years went by, she also found herself taking charge of the bakery more and more.

Eventually, her parents had decided that they finally wanted to take that vacation they had always dreamed of. Niki had been invited, but she wasn’t all that interested in ancient histories and beautiful sights, so she smiled and assured them that she could handle running the bakery while they was away.

And at the moment, Niki was offering pastries at a noble party.

It was stifling.

For one, neither the princes nor the king were anywhere to be found. This in itself was incredibly concerning, because for all Wilbur would complain and moan about the horrors of spending hours talking to old men and snobbish women while simultaneously pretending not to hate them, Wilbur was never actually *absent*.

Niki was sure that had something to do with King Philza dragging him in by the ear, but once again, he was nowhere to be seen.

Niki was especially confused on that particular point, because she could’ve sworn the invitation she received a few days ago detailed “*the King would be honored for you to attend his festivities...*”

If the King would be so honored to have her, why wasn’t he *there* in the first place?

Something was definitely wrong. She wished Wilbur were there to at least make a probably ill-timed joke over how wrong feeling it was. She wished Fundy and Eret had been invited.

Instead, Niki was alone, trying to figure out what on earth was going on while the nobles whispered to each other, almost looking more *worried* than proud and gossipy.

Niki managed to catch snippets of the conversation as she walked about the room, holding a tray of cookies for anyone to take.

“*He here—*”

“*—rumors may be true.*”

“*—black-born scandal?*”

Niki bristled. If they were talking about Philza’s laws, trying to stop the discrimination directed toward black-borns was *not* scandalous.

Well, to society it was, but it still drove her crazy, and Wilbur would often get into heated debates, eventually being all but escorted out of the room by Technoblade.

And finally, after what felt like hours of being bored and trying to smooth down her feathers, she finally saw what all the commotion was about.

The doors to the ballroom swung wide open, and a noble long, draping green robes, neon green wings, and a white mask entered the room.

*Dream.*

Niki’s silver platter of cookies slipped from her fingers and hit the polished floors with a resounding clatter. The sound was piercing in the dead silence of the ballroom, bouncing off the walls and ringing in Niki’s ears, but she couldn’t bring herself to care.

Dream was there. *Dream* was there.

She should be running. Niki should be turning around and running before everything went to ruin. There was no winning against Dream. There was no pleading for your life, no begging for mercy. There was no *fighting* him.

There was only fleeing or bending to his will.

At least, that’s what all the horror stories Niki’s mum used to tell her.

“Everyone,” Dream said, his voice strangely smooth for someone who was all but a demon in a mask, “Welcome.”

Fear spiked through Niki’s veins.

Horror rising through her, Niki was beginning to understand why King Philza was nowhere in sight.

Niki pov as promised.

I miss bjar already lol, I might start working on the next chapter tonight.

Thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, please be nice in the comments. <3 <3 <3  
<3 <3

# Chapter 22

## Chapter Summary

Tommy has a crisis, but at least he gets a bath as well.

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, discrimination, fantasy racism, discussion of murder,

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wilbur and Technoblade had returned to Tommy, Tubbo, and Schlatt with expressions of astonishment.

That did not make Tommy feel any better about any of this.

“What’s wrong?” Tommy asked, instinctually clutching onto Tubbo’s hand. Tubbo squeezed it.

“Nothing,” Wilbur said quickly, “Phil sent us back.”

Tommy flinched at the mention of King Philza. Sam said to trust him, and Tommy wanted to. He wanted to follow Sam’s wishes, but his father had said King Philza was bad. How was Tommy supposed to go against what his father had taught him?

His father had also wanted him to kill Sam.

Tommy didn’t want to think about this anymore.

“Why?” Tubbo asked.

“The kid,” Technoblade said, glancing back at the house, “There’s a kid who lives here. He’s got dual wings.”

Schlatt whistled. Tubbo only frowned.

“Dual wings?”

Tommy was glad that he wasn’t the only one who didn’t understand what was going on for the first time in what felt like forever.



“Their wings are a different color each,” Schlatt explained, “Like if you had a red wing and a green wing.”

Tubbo’s eyes widened. “Oh,” he said, “I thought that was just a thing little kids did when they were coloring in pictures.”

Tommy didn’t know what that meant. He was too afraid to ask.

“Nope,” Wilbur said, popping the ‘p’, “They’re exceedingly rare, and the coloring is all the rarer—”

“One black wing and one white wing,” Technoblade said bluntly, “We should count it a miracle that kid hasn’t been snatched in his lifetime.”

Tommy felt his heart skip a beat. One black wing? Why were they so calm about that? Black wings weren’t good, they were bad, they were terrifying, they *hurt* people. Tommy couldn’t even understand why Schlatt had kept him around the first time he saw the wing color.

Wilbur must’ve seen Tommy’s thoughts, although Tommy wasn’t sure how that would work.

But he must’ve seen his thoughts, because he said, “There’s nothing evil or bad about having black wings.”

“That’s not true,” Tommy argued without thinking.

Tubbo’s face fell, and even Technoblade was looking at him with a weird expression, like he had accidentally had a sip of alcohol.

Alcohol did not taste good. Tommy would know.

“With that sort of logic, we’re all evil,” Schlatt said, “I think almost all of us could kill someone with our feathers.”

Tommy scowled, looking away. Schlatt didn’t *understand*. “It’s different. You don’t-you don’t—”

“Tommy,” Wilbur said seriously, “I could kill someone instantly if I aimed my feathers correctly.”

“And I could literally turn someone’s blood into wine, causing them to die.” Schlatt added.

“And I could grow a plant in someone’s body,” Tubbo said, sounding far too casual about murder.

Technoblade only shrugged. “I don’t need my feathers to kill someone.” He patted his sword.

Tommy felt dizzy. He didn’t understand. He didn’t understand at all. How could they be so calm about this? How could... how could they just think that their powers were remotely the same thing, just because they could *cause* death? Their power wasn’t *death* itself. At least

their powers had *room* to be for good, while Tommy was trapped. He was trapped with the crushing reality that he had been built and branded to kill, and to only kill, and—

“Breathe, baby,” Wilbur said softly, “Tommy, you need to breathe.”

Tommy could breathe. He was breathing. He was sucking the air into his lungs and forcing it back out again, feeling like something terrible and unnatural had happened to him, but that was okay, because at least he would be making Wilbur happy.

“It’s different,” Tommy said, his voice coming out in a high-pitched whine, “You don’t—you don’t—”

“Tommy,” Tubbo said gently, “Your power can be used for good too.”

Tommy shook his head. No, it couldn’t. There was nothing good about it at all. Only death and hurt and—

“No, no, look,” Tubbo said, crouching down and pointing down to the ground.

Tommy forced himself to focus on the plant that Tubbo was pointing at. It had three leaves, but Tommy didn’t recognize it.

“This is poison ivy,” Tubbo explained, not touching the plant, “It gives a lot of people a rash, so killing that would be good. You know?”

Tommy’s hands were shaking. It was all so strange. Plants weren’t like people, killing plants wasn’t bad, but to be told it was *good*? How was that possible?

“And besides,” Technoblade said, “I’ve heard gossip. Plenty of people are wary of Phil’s power. If you make a bad person temporarily immortal and therefore impossible to defeat, it can’t exactly be counted as a good thing.”

Tommy didn’t understand at all.

King Philza was appearing back through the trees, and Tommy forced himself to calm the swirling storm of his thoughts. Tommy didn’t want to make King Philza angry.

“Alright, kids,” King Philza said, “We can stay here for a bit.”

Everyone was staring at Tommy weirdly, so he was the first to nod. “Okay,” he said quietly, hoping that everyone else would shut up on their strangeness.

Fortunately, nobody said anything on it, and after a few more statements of agreement, they went into the nice yard the surrounded the house.

Tubbo stared at the gardens, his eyes sparkling brighter than Tommy had seen them so far.

The flowers were pretty, and Tommy bent down to touch the grass. It was soft, and he ran his fingers through it a couple of times, enjoying the smoothness.

He spotted Wilbur smiling at him, and Tommy felt his face heat up as he leapt to his feet. What was he doing, touching the grass? There were better things to do, and Tommy had just gotten distracted.

Nobody else seemed to be paying Tommy any mind, however, so Tommy counted that as a small win, if nothing else.

Tommy continued walking up to the front door with Tubbo, where a kid a few inches taller than Tommy was standing. Just like Wilbur said, one of his wings were white, and the other wing was black.

Tommy found himself on guard in spite of himself. What if the kid tried to kill Tubbo? What if Tommy couldn't kill him and stop him? What if—

“Hello,” the kid said, sounding almost *nervous*, “I’m Ranboo! It’s, um, nice to meet you.”

For some reason, the greeting calmed some of Tommy’s fears.

“Hello!” Tubbo replied with equal brightness, “I’m Tubbo, and this is Tommy!”

Ranboo scrunched up his nose. “You smell.”

Tommy scowled. “No, I don’t.”

“You do a little bit,” Wilbur said gently, “Although I’m sure most of us aren’t as bathed as we could be.”

“That’s alright,” Schlatt said cheerfully, “We can always clean ourselves off later.”

Ranboo stepped out of the way of the door. “Oh, I, uh, there’s a tub in here,” he said stutteringly, “You can use.”

“We don’t have to,” Phil said, “This is your home.”

Ranboo twisted his fingers in his hands. “I... you guys really smell.”

Tommy didn’t understand why it mattered if they smelled a little bit, but the others were nodding in agreement, so maybe it would be best not to argue.

“Alright,” Technoblade said, stepping inside the house with Wilbur, “Tommy should probably go first, then.”

Tommy stiffened. He wasn’t sure why. There was nothing bad about bathing. He just... was him smelling bad such a problem? Was he causing problems just by standing in this room, smelling gross?

“You did nothing wrong,” Schlatt said, “But you’re pretty filthy.”

Tommy took a deep breath. Schlatt said he did nothing wrong. It was probably fine.

“Okay,” Tommy said softly, “Can... can someone show me where?”

Ranboo led Tommy to the room with a large wooden tub, and Tommy watched as everyone filled up pots of water and put them on what was called a stove, causing it to heat up. They then poured the water into the tub.

“Sponge baths are faster,” Tubbo muttered mutinously.

“Tough luck, kiddo,” Schlatt said gruffly, not even commenting on Tubbo’s rude tone of voice.

When the bath was filled, Ranboo gave Tommy a few more instructions. “This is the shampoo,” he said, “and there are some sponges if you need them. Oh! And there’s a towel and some fresh clothes.”

Tommy stared at the clothes. Ranboo was being awfully kind to offer so much to some random black-born kid.

To be honest, Tommy was surprised that Ranboo hadn’t mentioned anything about his wings yet. Tommy himself still watched Ranboo warily, even though Ranboo had been nothing but kind to them.

It made Tommy feel stupid, to be honest, but what was he supposed to do? Black-borns were *bad*.

Then again, Ranboo wasn’t fully black-born.

*“There’s nothing evil or bad about having black wings.”*

Tommy’s head hurt.

And then Ranboo left, shutting the door behind him and leaving Tommy alone with the bath.

Fortunately, Tommy *had* had baths before, so he quickly pulled off his clothing and dipped himself into water.

He nearly melted.

The warm water felt so *good*.

Sam had tried to make Tommy’s baths warm, but it was never as warm as this. This felt like blanket in a cold cave, a campfire in the middle of night, or a hug after feeling alone.

Tommy shut his eyes, relaxing further into the tub. He fluffed up his feathers, allowing the water to filter between them. He could practically *feel* the dirt all over himself peeling off.

Eventually, Tommy sat up and poured some of Ranboo’s shampoo into his hands and scrubbed at his hair. Tommy only had shampoo very rarely in his life, but Sam had shown him how to get into all the nooks and crannies so that he could make the most of it and stop Tommy’s head from itching.

When Tommy had gotten rid of every bit of dirt and blood and ash until his skin looked pink and almost fragile, he pulled himself out of the tub and dried himself off, quickly pulling on the clothes.

The new clothes were nicer feeling than his old ones. The cloth was softer, and Tommy felt almost like the shirt itself was giving him a hug.

His feathers felt like they were all over the place. Maybe... somebody would be willing to preen him? But they already preened that morning...

Tommy wouldn't bring it up.

He stepped out of the room, and heard voices down the short hallway. He quickly walked toward the sound, and he found himself in a small living area, where everyone was either sitting on sofas or the floor.

"Tommy!" Tubbo said brightly from the sofa.

King Philza looked up from whatever he was working on, and Tommy was astonished to realize that *he* was one of the ones on the floor. What was a literal king doing on the *floor*?

"Hey, mate," he said, "how do you feel?"

Tommy suppressed a yawn. For some reason, the bath had made him feel more tired than usual.

"Good," he said softly.

"You look better," Schlatt said, "I can actually see your freckles."

Tommy frowned. Freckles?

Wilbur's head snapped up at that, and his face split into a wide grin. "You have so many," he said, sounding strangely awed by it, "Where'd they come from?"

"I don't..." Tommy didn't know what freckles were.

"Where do you think?" Technoblade demanded, "It was from the sun. I can see some weird tans where he probably got sunburnt."

Tommy *did* know what sunburns were. It was *not* a pleasant experience.

"Alright, who wants to bathe next?" Schlatt asked.

Tubbo fidgeted, but he didn't move, glancing at Tommy.

"Tubbo can go if he wants," Tommy said quietly.

"Really?" Tubbo asked.

Tommy nodded.

Tubbo jumped from the couch and hurried out. Thanking Tommy, which was strange. Why would Tubbo thank Tommy for letting him bath? It wasn't like Tommy *controlled* who bathed next. That was probably Schlatt or Philza's job.

Wilbur was staring at Tommy, his wing fluffed up slightly.

"Tommy," he said slowly, "Can I, um, can I preen your feathers? It's fine if you say no, it's just..." Wilbur made a gesture with his hands. He was probably referring to how messy Tommy's feathers had become.

Tommy hesitated, but he was really tired. And he did want his feathers preened. Maybe the preening was a reward for bathing correctly or something.

Tommy nodded and quietly sat down in front of Wilbur who gently began bringing his fingers into Tommy's feathers, smoothing them out.

As always, Tommy melted slightly at the touch, and he felt himself becoming sleepier and sleepier. There was just something so *right* about being preened by Wilbur, something that told him that he was safe, that he could be protected.

Before Tommy quite realized what he was doing, he was snuggling into Wilbur's chest, his eyes dropping slightly.

Wilbur made a startled sound, and Tommy flinched away.

To Tommy's surprise, however, Wilbur didn't stop preening Tommy's wings, and Tommy slowly lowered himself back into Wilbur's warmth.

There was something so wonderful, so comforting, in being pressed up against Wilbur's warmth like this. It felt almost like being with Sam again, being safely tucked in his arms as Tommy cried about something inconsequential, or just when they were talking because Sam had never hesitated to provide Tommy with warmth or comfort.

Maybe... maybe Wilbur was the same way.

Tommy was half asleep when he felt Wilbur press a kiss on top of Tommy's head, and it was as though a thrill of warmth came rushing through his body.

Tommy wanted to say something, but the rest of him didn't want to move at all, didn't want to potentially destroy this moment.

So, instead, he said nothing, falling asleep in Wilbur's arms.

## Chapter End Notes

Here's your hurt/comfort for y'all <3

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments. <3

Comment or I'll kill niki next chapter. /j /lh

# Chapter 23

## Chapter Summary

Niki is having the best time.

And so is Wilbur. <3

## Chapter Notes

tw: creepiness, implied/referenced child abuse, scars, implied starvation, referenced kidnapping, referenced amputation, i think that's it?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Everyone was dead silent as Dream took a few more steps into the ballroom, and Niki felt a chill go through her wings as she saw the same stuffy nobles from before tucking their wings behind their backs and *bowing* in Dream's direction.

Niki didn't understand what was going on, but she at least had *some* sense of self preservation, so she quickly followed suit, trying to hide how badly her hands were shaking. Her breathing felt excessively loud in such a large and quiet room, and she quickly started to hold her breath.

She couldn't be noticed. She had to be as invisible as she always was. If she was noticed, she was as good as dead.

Unfortunately, Niki never had the best luck.

Dream walked all the way across the ballroom to the ornate throne that had been in the family for generations. He didn't sit down in it, instead standing beside it, as though he were too *humble* for such a prestigious position.

Niki might have no clue what was going on, but she knew that Dream had *no* business sitting down on that throne. As a matter of fact, Dream had no business being in this castle at all. How did he even manage to get in without being noticed? Why was everyone *bowing* to him?

"Noble people of the Antarctic Empire," Dream said, his voice still soft, "I'm sure many of you have questions as to my being here."



That would be an understatement. Niki was already glancing at the windows, horrified to find that they were *shut*.

The windows in the ballroom were often shut, it was a safety precaution, but usually the large glass doors to the balcony were half open, just with many guards stopping anyone from just deciding to enter.

But Niki saw guards walking toward the windows, *locking* them in place.

Niki's wings were already itching at the clicking sound.

They were trapped.

"Well, for those of you who are not aware," Dream looked in Niki's direction, and Niki froze. Was he looking at her? Someone else? "I am your new king."

Niki couldn't stop her gasp in time. She wasn't the only one.

Dream smiled, tilting his head, and Niki felt her feathers go on end. She wanted to leave. She wanted to get *out*.

But there was nowhere to go, and if what Dream said was true, Niki would have no chance of escaping before being caught by the guards.

"You see, Philza has been a plague on your kingdom, and I know you've noticed," Dream continued, "Those new black-born laws? It's as though he's been asking for your homes to be in more danger than before, as though he *wants* the black-borns to stage a coup and take you all out of power."

A murmur rose up in the crowd, but Dream spread his wings wide, causing a few green feathers to float in the air, and dead silence returned.

"And consider how unprotected he's left the kingdom," Dream went on, wrapping his hand around the throne, "He just *left*, and I was able to get into this palace without any difficulty at all."

Anger roiled in Niki's chest, and she forced it down. She couldn't blow up. She couldn't scream about how wrong Dream was.

Niki wouldn't be able to get any good done if she were dead.

"But I don't intend to hurt you," Dream said, pausing for a moment. Niki could practically hear the unsaid *yet*. "As a matter of fact, I want to help you. I want to restore this kingdom to its once former glory. I want to make every other kingdom *bow* to the splendor the Antarctic Empire can become."

Dream looked out on the crowd, his smile fading into a serious look. "But I can't do that without your utmost loyalty."

Nobles that Niki recognized were already down on their knees, their wings perfectly tucked behind them as before. A few others that Niki also recognized were more hesitant, but one look from Dream was enough to send them down as well.

If propaganda wasn't enough, Dream certainly had enough of the fear to keep everyone else in line.

Still, Niki wouldn't be surprised if she saw those who hesitated long gone and replaced with more loyal nobility before the week was over.

Niki herself quickly got down on her knees. She couldn't be seen. She couldn't be noticed.

She had to stay alive.

Niki must have done something to insult Prime recently, however, because Dream stepped away from the throne and started walking amongst the crowd of bowing people.

And he was walking straight towards *her*.

Niki instantly thought of anything that would make *her* special. She didn't believe there was anything interesting about her. She was simply serving food at a party like she always did. She wasn't wearing anything outlandish, and the only thing she had done that could have possibly captured Dream's attention was dropping that plate, but surely—

Dream was right in front of her now, and Niki willed herself to focus on the terrifying situation.

"Excuse me, lady..."

Her name. He wanted her name.

"Nihachu. My lord," she hastily tacked on.

"Lady Nihachu," Dream said, as though he were digesting the words, "Please rise."

Niki got to her feet, quickly working to change all of the crippling fear into quiet anger. She could work with anger. She couldn't work with terror.

Dream circled Niki, and Niki forced her wings to stay still.

"You aren't nobility, are you?" Dream muttered, his words still ringing clear across the room.

"No, my lord," Niki said, relieved to hear her voice submissive and respectful.

"Remind me your profession?"

As if Dream had any clue as to what it was to begin with.

"I'm a baker, my lord."

"You must be a fine baker to find yourself at such a prestigious occasion."

Dream had stopped circling her, instead staring at Niki like she was an enigma that he couldn't understand.

The feeling was mutual, even though Niki was sure that Dream was much less afraid of Niki than Niki was of him.

"Yes," Niki replied, forgetting to add any honorifics.

Dream seemed to forgive the oversight, however, because he continued on with the conversation. "Pardon my rudeness, but how did someone of your status—" Niki bristled. "—find yourself with such expensive earrings?"

The earrings. She had forgotten the *earrings*.

Niki felt her skin grow clammy. If there was anything that was likely to get her killed, it was those earrings. They already made her a target for noble scorn, but most nobles had gotten used to seeing them, Niki had forgotten that *they* were part of the reason people didn't like her or respected her to an unusual degree.

Her earrings were a gift from Wilbur, carefully crafted with gold and emerald, and they meant one thing and one thing only among the noble courts.

*This one was favored by the royal family.*

And it was no good lying to Dream about it. Dream surely knew, and there was no point in lying about something as critical as this. If Niki was lucky, Dream might see it as a show of faith if she confessed the true meaning of the earrings.

"They were a gift," she said quietly, taking the earrings from her ears and holding them out for Dream to take.

Dream took them. "From whom?"

Niki took a deep breath. "Prince Wilbur."

She held her breath and prayed that Dream wouldn't kill her instantly.

She wasn't sure if she was relieved when Dream chuckled instead. "The craftsmanship is exquisite," he said, "It would be a shame to let such good earrings go to waste."

Where was Dream going with this?

"Perhaps, if you do enough good work for me, I can return them to you," Dream said, "But that's an issue for another time. You look a little pale." Dream's voice suddenly shifted into one of concern. "Maybe you should get some rest?"

Niki hated to show weakness, but she wasn't about to ruin the only escape she had.

"I feel a little sick, my lord," she said, bowing again.

Dream nodded, and for a wonderful, terrible moment, Niki thought she might be allowed to leave.

That hope came crashing down when Dream motioned for a few guards. “Take her to a comfortable room,” he said, “I don’t want her flying unwell.”

Niki knew better than to struggle, and she allowed herself to be led away.

She was now a prisoner.

This was the last time she was ever letting Wilbur go off on his own again.

Wilbur could hardly believe it.

All he had intended to do was preen Tommy’s feathers, and now Tommy was *curled up* against him, asleep.

Tommy had fallen asleep on Wilbur.

Tommy had *trusted* Wilbur enough to fall asleep on top of him.

And Tommy was curled up into Wilbur, as though he were actively seeking warmth from him.

Wilbur could hardly believe it. Sure, he had hugged Tommy before, but never like this. Never had Tommy ever gotten in such a vulnerable way around Wilbur. Never had Wilbur expected this to happen.

It was amazing.

It was terrifying.

Asleep, Tommy looked so much younger. His expression was less dark. Wilbur couldn’t see the eyes that had endured a lifetime of misery.

As a matter of fact, if it weren’t for the gaunt cheeks and the abundance of scars that had become all the clearer at the wash Tommy had just had, Wilbur could pretend that none of this had ever happened, just for a moment.

Wilbur could pretend that Tommy had never been taken away, that they were both in the castle right now, and that Tommy had fallen asleep on top of him because Tommy never had a reason to be afraid of Wilbur in the first place.

Wilbur carefully wrapped his arms around Tommy, careful not to wake his baby brother up, and he brought his wings around to shield Tommy from invisible enemies.

Well... he brought his *wing* around Tommy.

The abrupt reminder of what Dream had done to Wilbur hit him like a cold bucket of ice, and finally, the tears that had been threatening to escape ever since Tommy allowed Wilbur to preen him started leaking out of his eyes.

Wilbur forced himself to stay quiet, however. He couldn't afford to wake Tommy. He couldn't afford to ruin this wonderful moment.

Wilbur, who hadn't taken his eyes off of Tommy, heard a shuffling very close to him, and he looked up to see Techno sitting down next to Wilbur, stretching out his left wing.

Wilbur looked between Techno's pink wing and his own golden wing wrapped protectively around Tommy, and it barely took a moment of deliberation for him to nod.

Technoblade shuffled closer to Wilbur until he was basically squished up against Wilbur's side, and he wrapped his left wing around Tommy. He wrapped his other wing around Wilbur.

Wilbur found he didn't mind. They were twins, after all. They both wanted to keep their little brother safe.

So, they allowed Tommy to continue sleeping under the shelter of their wings, and Tommy muttered slightly under his breath, shuffling even further into Wilbur's chest.

*"Love you too, Wilby,"* he whispered.

A sob wanted so badly to escape, and Wilbur screwed up his face, a high-pitched whimper coming out from the back of his throat instead.

*Wilby.* Was that what Tommy would have called him? Would that have been the nickname to follow Wilbur around for years as Tommy grew up?

Phil stood up from where he was sitting and settled down behind Technoblade and Wilbur, wrapping his wings around the both of them. It was warm. It was comforting.

Tommy would probably have no idea how safe he was in that moment.

But Wilbur did, and he pressed another kiss down in Tommy's hair, as though that could protect him from all harm that could befall him forever and forever.

And that would have to be enough.

## Chapter End Notes

Ummmmm, i am very tired

I'm back from camp but don't expect me to be back to regular updatings.

Ummmmmmmmmm

This chapter was gonna be longer.

yeah

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments. <3

Comment or I'll kill niki /lh /j

# Chapter 24

## Chapter Summary

Eret and Fundy

Sadboo

Sad puffy

Peeps angst edition

## Chapter Notes

Tw: touch starvation, referenced death, referenced child abuse, referenced murder, referenced kidnapping, self-loathing, I think that's it?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Something was wrong.

Fundy had gone to Niki's bakery, expecting her to be ready with some delicious steamed rolls that he and Eret could eat up like greedy pigeons. When Fundy had arrived, however, Niki was nowhere to be seen.

"Where'd she go?" Fundy asked one of Niki's employees, who was covering for Niki while she was gone.

Her employee fluffed their wings agitatedly. "She went to a stupid party last night and didn't come back," they said, glancing around, "Did you hear the rumors?"

Fundy had not heard the rumors.

To be honest, Fundy wasn't sure he *wanted* to hear the rumors.

"No?"

The employee bit the inside of their cheek, fidgeting with their patterned feathers of red and black stripes. Fundy wasn't sure why they had to go through such mental gymnastics to tell Fundy a basic *rumor*, which were usually falling off the lips of gossips before you could get away from the area.

“They say... they say Dream is in the palace,” the employee said in a rush, “Dream’s crowned himself *king*. ”

That... made absolutely no sense whatsoever.

“He can do that?” Fundy demanded, “But Philza’s still alive.”

The employee shook their head. “That’s where the rumors grow,” they whispered, lowering their tone, “They say Dream’s killed the king, or that Philza abandoned them, or that Philza was never the rightful ruler at all and Dream simply reclaimed his throne.”

Fundy snorted. “You don’t actually believe that, do you?”

Niki’s employee eyed the emerald bracelet around Fundy’s wrist. “You would know more than me. Have you seen the king recently?”

Come to think of it, no. But Fundy was pretty sure that the king had gone to chase after Wilbur, who had decided to be an idiot and chase after *Dream*. Or, at least, that was his theory. To be fair, it had only been a few days since Wilbur had left.

Still, Fundy hoped that Wilbur wasn’t dead. If he was, Fundy would band up with Niki and murder him himself.

“Listen, the king wouldn’t let himself get killed,” Fundy assured the employee. Now more aware of the well crafted bracelet than before, Fundy fidgeted with it slightly, and he considered hiding it under his sleeve altogether. “I’m sure he’s on his way back to take his throne back, *if* Dream has taken over the palace. And besides, if he’s in charge now, why hasn’t he declared it to everyone yet?”

The employee nodded. “Yeah,” they said, “Yeah, you’re probably right.” They sighed, sounding slightly relieved. “Sorry, I’ve been on edge since Niki didn’t come back. She’s never this late.”

“I’ll keep an eye out for her,” Fundy assured the employee, “Go keep doing your job. Can I have those rolls?”

Despite Fundy’s nonchalance, worry onward at his gut. If they got a royal decree saying that there was going to be a coronation for Dream’s king hood, Fundy was going to be pretty annoyed.

Eret would be livid when he found out the news.

Better slowly break it to him now before Eret found out in the worst way possible and got them imprisoned.

The employee gave Fundy his rolls, and Fundy thanked them before quickly leaving the premises, heading straight toward Eret’s flower shop.

There was a heavier air to the entire city. Either the rumor about Dream had really gotten to the citizens, or something really *was* up.



Fundy slipped his bracelet off of his wrist and stuffed it into his pocket. This might just be a baseless rumors created by frightened minds, or it might be a legitimate truth, and being caught with a symbol of closeness to the royal family would do Fundy no favors in the face of a coup.

Fundy reached a stand stuffed to the brink full of flowers, and he spotted Eret standing behind it, smiling as they handed some customers a bouquet of yellow roses.

“May your day have clear skies,” Eret was saying as the people left with the flowers.

Fundy approached Eret, trying to grin easily and probably failing. “How’s the business?” He asked.

Eret rolled their eyes. “The same as it always is,” they said, “It’s getting food on the table.”

Fundy smiled and nodded, but there wasn’t much time to waste on pleasantries. Fundy glanced at the necklace around Eret’s neck, a shining emerald attached to a golden chain.

“You might want to hide that,” Fundy muttered, gesturing to his own neck, as though there were an invisible necklace around it, “There have been some rumors spreading around.”

Eret frowned, glancing down at their necklace and stuffing it under their shirt. “What sort of rumors?”

Fundy shrugged. “You won’t like it,” he said reluctantly.

Eret leveled Fundy with a hard look. “Fundy, I don’t like many things that have gone on with my life. I’ve leveled those storms and I can level the others. What’s going on?”

Fundy sighed, and he lowered his voice so that nobody could overhear. “The rumor goes that Dream’s managed a coup.”

As Fundy expected, Eret’s face darkened instantly, and they grabbed tightly onto a rose. Fundy winced when he saw the thorns pierce Eret’s skin.

“Let go of that,” he commanded.

Eret blinked, glancing down at his hand, and he quickly let go of the rose, blood flowing out of his palm where the thorns were once in his skin.

“Sorry,” Eret muttered, grabbing a piece of his shirt and wrapping his palm with it, “Just... seriously?”

“Yeah,” Fundy said apologetically, “They’re probably just stupid rumors, but if it’s true, we all know what it has to mean.”

Eret closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “Treason.”

“Yeah.”

They paused their conversation as a few guards walked past. While the guards used to be a comforting presence, now Fundy felt like they were watching his every move, waiting for a moment to arrest Fundy for simply one word against Dream.

The thought was ludicrous, of course, Even if the guards were forced to be loyal to Dream, the chances of them arresting people for every small slight was unlikely.

Eret gritted her teeth together, looking especially agitated as she fidgeted with the flowers, mindlessly arranging them into the guard was properly out of sight.

“I hate traitors,” she muttered.

“I know.”

“How many do you think there would have had to be?” Eret whispered, her voice quivering with rage, “How many families are going to be ruined before all of this is over?”

“I don’t know,” Fundy said, trying his best to sound sympathetic, “But they’ll recover. You did.”

“We nearly starved,” Eret snarled, “I got *lucky*. If Mum didn’t have the ability to keep flowers fresh for long periods of time, and if I hadn’t met Wilbur...”

“You had a stable income before you met Wilbur.”

Eret didn’t say anything.

This sort of subject was much more personal for Eret than for the average person. Eret’s father was the one who distracted the guards watching the skies of the palace the night Prince Thomas had been kidnapped. He was executed, and Eret’s family fell from their respectable reputation.

Fundy decided that it might be best to change the subject.

“Anyway, be on your guard,” Fundy said, pulling a roll from his bag, “Do you want one?”

Eret smiled weakly and took the hot bread from Fundy’s hand. They ate quietly, staring up at the sky, where people were flying every which way to get to whichever destination they needed.

“Well,” Fundy sighed, “I’m going to see where Niki went off to. Safe skies.”

“Yeah,” Eret muttered, “Safe skies.”

These people were really weird.

Ranboo was used to only one type of visitor in his life, and that was typically the people who had figured out that Ranboo was a dual-winged individual. They always wanted something

from him, and the more awful ones would try to take him for the black and white color of his wings.

But even the nice ones weren't the most pleasant to get a visit from.

*"My son is dead," a woman had wept to him once, "Please, please bring him back. Please, he's the only one I have."*

Ranboo had almost done it too, but then he remembered the careful instructions his dad had given him before he died.

*"Never ever bring back the dead," he had instructed, "It's equal and opposite exchange. Even if you save a life, you'll be killing someone at the same time."*

Ranboo had been forced to refuse, and she nearly attacked him in a desperate rage.

So yeah, even the nice ones had always wanted Ranboo's power.

And it wasn't like these guys *didn't* want anything from Ranboo. As a matter of fact, they were asking basically for Ranboo to provide them a temporary home, a temporary supply of food, and even fresh clothes and bathing supplies.

But... they hadn't even blinked at Ranboo's power. They hadn't cared that Ranboo had the ability to kill. They didn't care that Ranboo could grant temporary immortality. They didn't care that Ranboo could give them anything they wanted.

Well, maybe they cared, but they hadn't *said* anything about it. King Philza had gone as far as to say that he wouldn't hurt Ranboo.

Dad had always said that the king was good and kind. Maybe the royal family was different like that.

Also, they were just weird in general.

There was a black-born in their company, and no one seemed to hate him, except for maybe the black-born himself, and that was *great*, but incredibly unusual.

Prince Wilbur was missing a wing, and Ranboo had to stop himself from staring multiple times as he leaned against Prince Technoblade to go place to place.

There were these two other rolls, Tubbo and Schlatt, who didn't seem to be a part of the family, and yet they were in the company of royalty anyway. Maybe they were nobles?

The final thing that Ranboo took note of was less *strange* and more like something he might have found in his memories.

They were all snuggling with each other.

Tommy, the black-born, had fallen asleep while being preened by Prince Wilbur, and Prince Wilbur had let the boy curl up in his lap. Then Prince Technoblade had gotten in close to

Wilbur, and King Philza had wrapped his wings around the both of them.

When Tubbo was done cleaning himself, he curled up against Schlatt, who was seemingly his dad.

Ranboo used to cuddle with his dad.

Ranboo's dad was dead.

Ranboo couldn't even remember the last time he had been preened by someone that wasn't himself, much less the last time he got hugged.

Well, that was a lie.

The last time was two years ago.

But he was fine. Soon, the royal family would leave, and Ranboo would be able to continue his life as he always had.

Alone.

It was fine.

Ranboo had to step out of the living room out of fear of crying in front of everyone. He stepped inside his bedroom, and he spotted the memory journal that his dad had given him.

He missed being hugged. He missed being preened.

Ranboo didn't stop the tears from coming.

He hoped that nobody heard his sobs.

Ranboo wasn't sure how long he sat there, hugging himself in a meager attempt at giving himself that wonderful feeling of warmth.

But eventually, he heard a small wrapping sound from the bedroom door.

"Mate?" King Philza's voice came from the other side, "Are you doing alright in there?"

Ranboo felt himself grow hot in mortified embarrassment. Now the king had heard him cry like a baby. He should've just sucked it up. The literal king of the empire was now going to judge him, or think him weak, and...

Ranboo hadn't answered him yet.

"I'm okay," Ranboo croaked out, "Sorry for waking you."

"You didn't wake me," Philza's voice said, sounding kind even now, "I just had to step away from Tommy."

"Why?"

There was a solemn silence for a moment, and Ranboo wondered if he had said something wrong.

“Tommy... he doesn’t trust me all that much. I didn’t want him to wake up and see me there and panic.”

“Oh,” Ranboo said lamely. He wasn’t sure what King Philza’s relationship with Tommy was meant to be, but it was pretty obvious that Philza cared about Tommy a lot. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright, mate,” King Philza said, “Can I open the door?”

Ranboo cursed himself for his forgetfulness, and he quickly stood up and opened the door for King Philza.

He was surprised to see that Philza was still smiling, but when he saw Ranboo, he made a weird expression, his eyes seeming almost sad.

“Sorry,” Ranboo whispered, wondering if he had done something wrong.

He wished his dad was still alive. Things were always so much easier with him around.

“No, no, don’t be,” Philza said, his voice soft, “Are you alright, mate?”

“I’m fine,” Ranboo said again, although his voice cracked a little more that time, “Just tired.”

“It is pretty late,” Philza admitted, “Why don’t you get some sleep, be then I can help you and breakfast? Just a little help since we’ve basically taken over your house.”

That actually sounded really nice.

“Yeah, okay,” Ranboo said quietly, “I’m going to get some sleep now.”

Philza nodded. “Okay.”

And so Ranboo shut the door and turned around, walking to his nest for a weak attempt at sleep. He tried not to think about the family curled up comfortingly around each other.

Ranboo felt cold enough as it was.

Puffy was in chains.

Her already hard to control hair was now in sweaty and bloody clumps against her head, some of it chopped carelessly off by swords in a struggle. Her white wings were stained a mix of brown and red from blood, and she was aware she was shaking from head to toe.

Dream and ordered her to be sent away to her bedroom, which was firmly locked and surrounded by guards.

Puffy had already tried escaping a few times, but the only thing that had earned her was clipped wings and more reinforced chains, much to her frustration.

And to think that she had once been an esteemed captain in Dream's army.

Or, at least, that was what Dream had let her believe. Now the thought only served to make her sick to her stomach.

Dream was in the palace. Dream had *her*:

And Puffy was utterly useless to him.

So what did Dream want?

Puffy heard footsteps and then low voices outside of her door, and she jumped to her feet, preparing herself for anything. This could be Dream. This could be a guard. Either way, Puffy couldn't afford to waste any chances to escape, no matter how slim they were.

She shifted her feet into position, preparing to use the chain as a noose for whatever unsuspecting person came walking into the room.

The door swung wide open, and Dream stepped inside.

Puffy's heart was already going a mile per minute, but she had fought Dream once today. She could do it again.

Dream pulled out one of his own feathers, crushed it, and snapped his fingers in one clean motion. Puffy let out a cry of pain as she felt something tear inside her leg, and she collapsed to the ground.

"Hello, Puffy," Dream said calmly, pulling out a different feather and snapping his fingers. The pain went away, and Puffy breathed out a sigh of relief. "How has your stay been? Comfortable, I hope."

"Go to hell," Puffy snarled, pulling herself to her feet, "What did you do to Tubbo?"

Dream laughed. "You're still hung up over that little boy?" He asked. He sighed. "You really are good at letting other people take the fall for you."

It wasn't hard to figure out who Dream was talking about.

And the implications were horrific when it came to Tubbo.

"What did you *do*?" She whispered, trying to quell the quacking in her heart.

Dream didn't say anything, instead walking across the room to where a portrait of Sam sat on the wall. Dream stared at it quietly, and Puffy seethed in rage, although old terror kept her from saying anything.

“Oh isn’t he *precious*?” Dream cooed, “I forgot that he used to have freckles. And the redness on his cheeks really makes him seem much younger.” He turned to Puffy. “When was this made?”

It was made after Sam had been declared dead. Puffy’s feathers, now carrying Philza’s old power, were able to tap into memories, and they had given the painter those feathers so that they could capture Sam’s likeness.

Of course, Puffy had only shown the good memories. The ones where Sam was laughing and joking around, and the painter had done an excellent job, although it had filled Puffy with emotion every time she laid eyes on it.

Now, of course, Sam’s death was like an old wound, but Dream’s fresh arrival in Puffy’s life was like he was trying to cut it open all over again.

“It doesn’t matter,” Puffy said, crossing her arms.

Dream hummed. “Something tells me that Sam was never one to sit still for paintings,” he said, “Was it done after I took him?”

*I took him.*

Sam had never been dead. Sam had been taken.

And Puffy had never tried to find and rescue him.

“I’m not telling you anything about him,” Puffy whispered.

“Do you want to know how he died?” Dream asked abruptly. He smiled. “I’ll tell you.” Puffy couldn’t breathe. Did she want to know? Did she want to know how badly she had failed her first friend?

Yes.

But it terrified her.

“What’s the catch?” She whispered.

“No catch,” Dream said simply, “I found his body, you know. Thomas left it behind.”

If Puffy were speaking to anyone else, she would’ve closed her eyes.

“I don’t want to hear this.”

Dream’s smile grew. “I took all of his feathers, of course,” he said, “Before I disposed of his body.”

“You’re sick,” Puffy hissed.

“I’m prudent,” Dream corrected, “I’m deciding what to do with you at the moment, so if you please, stop killing my soldiers, Captain.”

Puffy flinched in spite of herself. Dream laughed before leaving the room.

Puffy tightened her hands into fists. She would get out of there. She had to.

She glanced at the picture of Sam, fifteen and smiling with freckles and sunburnt cheeks, and she resisted the urge to sob.

When Tommy woke up, the first thing he was aware of was the alarming warmth he felt all over his body.

The second thing he realized was that he was not alone.

Instead, he was resting against Wilbur, whose breathing was steady, as though he was asleep.

Tommy couldn’t be sure of that, though, and he held his own breath, trying to decide what to do.

Was he allowed to be doing this? Was he allowed to be leaning against Wilbur in this way, leeching his warmth? Was Tommy allowed to seek out comfort from the person he had doomed? Was Tommy allowed to even be bothering Wilbur like this? How long had he been asleep?

And even if Wilbur was fine with this, even if everyone was fine with this, that didn’t change the fact that Tommy was awake, and Tommy might not be. For all Tommy knew, Wilbur was sleeping peacefully, and one wrong move on Tommy’s part was going to destroy Wilbur’s restful ness, and then Wilbur might be mad, and then Tommy would never be allowed to do this ever again—

A small part of Tommy just wanted to cry when he noticed gold and pink wings wrapped around him like a protective curtain.

So Technoblade was there too.

If Wilbur wasn’t going to be angry at being woken up, Technoblade definitely would.

Tommy’s eyes burned, and he tried to swallow back the lump in his throat. He didn’t understand what was going on. He didn’t understand why he felt this way. He didn’t know if he as supposed to leave or if he was supposed to stay or if there was no correct answer and he would be punished either way.

But for some strange reason, Tommy felt this overwhelming sensation of *safety* from the two of them. It was different with Tubbo. When he was leaning against Tubbo, it was as though they were protecting each other.



With Wilbur and Technoblade, though it was mostly Wilbur, Tommy felt as though they were protecting him, and him only.

The idea was so strange that tears began spilling out of his eyes, and he unintentionally let out a high-pitched whine.

And then he felt Wilbur shuffling underneath him. “Toms?”

Tommy’s heart dropped. Now he had woken Wilbur up. Now he had ruined everything.

Maybe that was for the best. He didn’t deserve their love. He didn’t deserve their comfort. He hadn’t done anything to earn it, and Tommy had caused Wilbur so much *hurt* recently.

Tommy forced himself away from Wilbur’s arms before Wilbur pushed him away himself, before Tommy started clinging onto him with a refusal to let go.

“Tommy?” Wilbur asked again, sounding surprised.

Tommy kept his eyes cast on the ground, tucking his wings behind himself. Maybe Wilbur would be less angry if Tommy bowed. His father had always liked that.

Tommy was halfway through shifting into a bowing position when a strange sensation pushed up against his chest like a hiccup and a peeping sound came out.

Everyone in the room froze.

More peeping sounds came out of Tommy.

Cold horror doused Tommy like a bucket of ice.

He was *peeping*. He was doing something only *toddlers* did in the imprinting stage of their life. How pathetic did someone have to be to go back to *imprinting*?

They were all going to be so mad.

“I’m sorry,” Tommy whined, sobs mixing with the peeping sounds, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’ll try to stop, I’m sorry.”

“Oh, *Tommy*,” Wilbur whispered, “Why would we be angry for this?”

What?

Tommy glanced up at Wilbur, not even trying to mask his confusion at Wilbur’s words. Wilbur looked like he wanted to cry again, and Tubbo was coming off of his position on the sofa toward Tommy.

Tommy continued peeping, trying to think of something to say.

“I’m going to get Dad,” Technoblade muttered, pulling himself to his feet. He probably hadn’t meant for Tommy to hear, but he had heard anyway, and the idea of *Philza* seeing

Tommy in such a vulnerable state was enough to make him sob and peep all the more.

And then Tubbo was there, slowly placing his hands on Tommy's shoulders. Tommy felt a thrill of warmth as Tubbo ran his hands back and forth on Tommy's arms, and slowly but surely, the peeping faded away.

Tubbo continued rubbing his hands on Tommy's shoulders as Tommy sniffed loudly, trying to find control over his vocal chords.

"I didn't mean to," he whispered, "I don't know what's happening to me, I'm sorry."

He hoped that they would understand.

Schlatt was the first to speak. "He's imprinting again," he said, "I didn't even know that was a thing that could happen."

The door opened, and Tommy stiffened when he saw Philza enter the room with Ranboo. Tubbo's hands were still on Tommy's shoulders, so he slowly relaxed again.

"It can," Phil said quietly, "When someone's been under heavy stress, and they're thrust into a brand new environment, sometimes they'll start imprinting again. There's nothing wrong with it. I've seen it happen before."

Somehow, Tubbo and Tommy had started leaning against each other again, but the warmth felt so good that Tommy couldn't bring himself to complain at all.

If Philza wasn't angry, maybe nobody else would be either.

Still, it made Tommy's skin crawl. Why hadn't anyone gotten angry at him yet? How come nobody had tried to punish him? Where was their line? When would Tommy go so far that even these people decided to take action?

Tommy didn't know, but if he didn't find out soon, he thought he might burst.

He pushed himself away from Tubbo, suddenly feeling unworthy of the warmth, and the peeping continued again.

Tubbo looked hurt, and Tommy just wished that he could have Sam back. Sam would know what to do.

"You can't keep pushing us away," Wilbur practically pleaded, "Tommy, it isn't healthy to be away from people while imprinting."

It was a direct order. Tommy should listen.

Instead, Tommy stood up abruptly, and ignoring everyone's startled shouts, he dashed out of the room, his peeping only growing louder.

I have no regrets. For those of you who don't know, I wrote Peeps, that fluff fic you may or may not know about.

Sorry for typos, I'm still at the beach.

Thank you for reading, please be nice in the comments, and I hope you enjoyed! <3

Comment or I'll kill Ranboo /lh /j

# Chapter 25

## Chapter Summary

“Just stay away from me.”

Ranboo didn't move. He just stared at Tommy like he had never seen anyone like him before.

“You look lonely.”

## Chapter Notes

tw: referenced suicide attempt, suicidal thoughts, touch starvation, self isolation, self loathing, referenced death, implied/referenced child abuse, fire, injury

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Niki was not pleased with the situation she currently found herself in.

The bedroom she had been escorted to was nice enough, of course. There was a lovely pile of blankets and pillows in the center of the room that could be used for nesting, and there was a balcony off the side of the room.

Of course, most bedrooms had balconies, so that didn't mean much. This balcony had two guards on it, likely there to prevent Niki from escaping. Niki also gathered that there were a few guards outside her bedroom door.

Niki felt pity for some of the guards. While a few of them looked as though their life's purpose had finally been fulfilled, most of them looked scared, as though they had no idea what they were supposed to do.

After pacing around the room for a little bit, Niki sat down, resting her head against the door.

“Don't lose heart,” she said quietly, hoping that the guards on the other side could hear her, “He only succeeds because nobody is brave enough to stand up to him.”

There was no response. Niki hadn't expected there to be.

In the silence of her room, thoughts flew wildly through Niki's head, causing her to start frantically pacing again. If Dream had managed to take over the kingdom, where was

Wilbur? Where was Technoblade? Where was king Philza himself? Had Dream managed to kill them?

Speaking of Dream, what did he want with Niki? Was she being held hostage? For whom? Wilbur? That meant that Wilbur was still alive, but that didn't mean very good things for Niki.

And did Dream know Niki's power? Was he going to use her as a weapon?

Niki gritted her teeth. There was no way she was letting *that* happen.

She needed a way to get out of here.

Tommy didn't go very far.

As a matter of fact, he didn't even go outside. His peeping was so painfully loud, so painfully *obvious*, he was afraid that his father would hear them if he happened to be nearby.

And Tommy loved his father, he did, but his father was dangerous. Tommy didn't want to be near him. Tommy didn't want to be taken away. Tommy didn't want to be thrust back underground, chains around his wrists, someone new being brought in day after day after day just for Tommy to... to...

Tommy sprinted up the stairs and found a small closet full of blankets, and he stuffed himself into it unthinkingly. Maybe the blankets would muffle the sound of the peeping? Maybe the blankets would make him feel less cold, less desperate to be held?

Tommy didn't deserve to be held. He didn't deserve to live at all. As a matter of fact, he *deserved* to be imprisoned, to be chained, to be punished.

So why was nobody in his stupid family doing that? Why was nobody punishing him? They all spoke in soft tones, comforting him, sounding like *Sam*, which was so wrong and so right at the same time, and it was all so confusing. It made Tommy's head hurt and spin and—

Tommy was dimly aware that his peeping had mixed with sobs, and Tommy knew he must be the most pathetic human being in the entire kingdom. Here he was, curled up in a closet peeping like a baby bird desperately pleading for his mother.

There was a knock on the door to the closet, and Tommy flinched away.

“Um, hello?” said a somewhat unfamiliar voice, “Can I come in?”

“No,” Tommy snapped. His peeps got louder. “Yes. I don't know. Go away.”

Tommy didn't know what he wanted.

The door slowly opened anyway, and Tommy winced at the light that filled his dark closet. He forced himself back into the corner a little more, as though that would change anything.

Tommy hoped he got punished.

The dual-winged kid, Ranboo, was standing in front of Tommy, all but towering over him with his height. Tommy's eyes instantly zeroed in on the black wing, and he flinched away.

"What do you want?" he whispered.

Maybe Ranboo had come to kill him. That would be fitting, Tommy thought. It could be justice for all the people that Tommy had killed.

Tommy had sometimes wanted to try his own feathers on himself, but it never worked.

Tommy couldn't decide if that was a good thing or not.

Hopefully, Ranboo's feathers were about as painless as Tommy's feathers looked.

"You scared everyone," Ranboo said, "Your family is really worried."

Tommy brought his knees to his chest, peeping all the more at the mention of family.

"They're not my—" A few peeps interrupted his words. "—family."

"Oh. Sorry."

"Just stay away from me."

Ranboo didn't move. He just stared at Tommy like he had never seen anyone like him before.

"You look lonely."

Tommy brought his wings up to shield himself from Ranboo, as though that could hide his apparent look of loneliness.

*He felt lonely.*

"I want to be left alone," Tommy whispered, feeling his entire body shake, "Please."

Ranboo still didn't leave, because he was stupid or something.

"The closet doesn't look comfortable," he stated, "If you want to hide, I have a bedroom that's nicer."

"The closet is fine."

The closet wasn't fine. It felt like it was closing in Tommy, it's small walls trying to swallow him whole as Tommy pushed away the memories of his first bedroom. His first bedroom that was cold and dark and damp and empty and nest-less and so incredibly lonely with the stench of death in every corner—

"Tommy, please get out of the closet."

This time, it wasn't Ranboo who spoke, but Tubbo, and Tommy jerked his head up at him in shock.

There were tear stains on Tubbo's cheeks, and terrible guilt filled Tommy's chest. Had he done that to Tubbo?

"I want to be alone," Tommy whispered.

"You can be alone in the other room," Tubbo promised, although it looked like it pained him to say it, "*Please.*"

And Tommy... Tommy pulled himself out of the closet, refusing to take either Ranboo or Tubbo's hands. Instead, he just allowed them to lead Tommy to the other room, which already had a nest pre-made. As soon as Tommy stepped inside, he slammed the door shut in both of their faces before darting across the room and burying his face into a pillow.

The peeping still felt tauntingly loud.

Tears pricked at the corners of his eyes.

He wanted warmth. He wanted to be hugged and cradled and preened and cared for so badly that he thought he was going to burn. His chest was a raging fire, screaming at him to let people in, to let them care.

But Tommy was so cold that he might as well have been in the snow Sam had told him about. Tommy might as well be the last flame of a fire that was about to go out, dying completely.

Was this how Tommy died? Did he die cold and alone, desperate for love but undeserving of anything?

Tommy wrapped his arms around himself in a hopeless imitation of comfort, but it didn't make him feel much better. He tried to bury himself in blankets, but he only felt suffocated, and he flung them off again. His peeping was becoming so loud that it would probably scare any creature nearby away.

Cold, lonely, and exhausted, Tommy shut his eyes, desperate for some sort of reprieve.

Niki couldn't think of many good plans.

The only one she *could* think of was stupidly dangerous and deadly, and she didn't exactly want to die in her attempt to escape.

So, she bided her time, hoping for a window where she could escape through a little more easily.

The next day, all patience was thrown out the window.

Because Niki had been graced with a visit from Dream himself.

“I hope you’re enjoying your stay,” he had said as soon as he entered.

Niki had glared, clenching her hands into fists. “You can’t keep me here,” she said, trying to be brave, “Let me go.”

Dream laughed. “I can do whatever I’d like,” he said, “After all, I am your king.”

“By what right?” Niki snarled, “Nobody has crowned you. You can’t just march in and declare yourself king. The true king will return, and then he’ll kill—”

“No, I don’t think he will,” Dream interrupted, “Do you really think I don’t have a plan for these sorts of things?”

“I think you’re not match for Philza, or you would’ve tried this a long time ago.”

It was at times like these that Niki wondered where her self-preservation had ever decided to go.

Dream’s lips tilted to a frown, but then he laughed again. “You’re a feisty one, aren’t you?”

Niki didn’t say anything, only glaring. It was as though the hot anger running through her veins was enough to ward off any sense of fear she had. As a matter of fact, the only thing Niki wanted to do was stride across the room and snap Dream’s mask in half.

“What do you want?” she snapped.

Dream hummed. “That remains to be seen,” he said, “Thank you, Niki. You’ve given me a lot to think about.”

“You’re not welcome,” Niki snapped.

Dream only laughed again, and somehow, it made Niki feel far more helpless, far weaker than she would’ve if he had slapped her or something. It was as though even her words had no effect on Dream, that there was nothing she could do to damage this monster.

He was indestructible, and Niki was helpless.

Dream left, and Niki forced herself to just be glad his visit was barely any time at all.

After that visit, Niki felt a larger sense of urgency to get out of the palace. Dream was up to something. Dream was planning for the king to be killed. Dream had *liked* Niki’s advice.

And Niki still didn’t know what Dream wanted to do with her.

The only way Niki could possibly upset Dream was to get away. Maybe Dream would be merely inconvenienced, maybe Dream wouldn’t care at all. But if Niki were free, she could organize a rebellion. If Niki were free, she could help the people take Dream off the throne themselves.

So Niki executed her stupid and dangerous plan.



It was probably late into the afternoon that Niki took a loose feather from her wings and crushed it in her hands.

Giving one hard look at the pile of blankets that were meant for a nest, she snapped her fingers.

A small fire started at the top of the pile. It didn't take long for that fire to spread into a roaring blaze, and suddenly, smoke filled the room, causing Niki to choke a little bit.

Admittedly, this was a somewhat risky plan. Already, the fire was causing the furniture and drapes to burst into flames as well. Smoke burned at Niki's eyes like tiny knives, filling her lungs like a poison trying to choke her alive.

The guards on the balcony instantly caught wind of what was going on, and they burst inside, shouting at the top of their lungs to get help to put out the fire. Niki took the opportunity to dash across the room to the balcony, ignoring the licking flames that burned at her skin and clothing.

She had to get out of there.

The guards were distracted with the fire, and the smoke was blocking Niki from view. It wasn't hard to weave her way around them and take a magnificent leap from the balcony.

She distantly heard more shouting. "*She's getting away!*" But Niki didn't care as she spread her wings to stop her free-fall. She didn't care because now she was *out*, now she was *free*—

And then an arrow pierced her wing in a moment of blinding pain.

Fortunately, Niki managed to maintain her wits enough to stop herself from dying on the way down, instead, awkwardly stopping her fall and tumbling to the ground.

Unfortunately, Niki had not managed to make it out of the castle grounds.

She lay on the ground, the wind knocked out of her and every part of her in pain. She could feel the burns on her skin more now, and the arrow in her wing only added to this overwhelming urge to sob.

But Niki wasn't out yet, and she didn't have time to cry. She had to get out.

Niki forced herself to her feet, knowing she wasn't going to be able to fly anymore. She'd have to find some other way to get out, and she instinctively reached for one of her feathers.

Already, Niki saw two guards closing in on her from above, diving down at her like birds of prey. Niki crushed the feather in her palm, looking directly at one of the guard's wings before snapping her fingers.

The guard's wing lit aflame and he came crashing to the ground just like Niki had a few moments ago. Niki tried to push away her guilt.

The other guard landed right in from of Niki, grabbing her wrists before she could grab another feather. Niki thrashed, trying to kick him wherever she could manage, but the guard dodged so swiftly out of the way that it didn't do any good.

"Play along," the guard whispered, his purple eyes flashing in a warning.

Come to think of it... this guard looked *young*. Younger than Philza would allow in his ranks.

And Niki suddenly felt the overwhelming urge to trust him.

She stopped kicking, allowing the boy to twist her arms behind her like she was some common criminal.

"You go to the infirmary," he instructed the guard on the ground, "I'll escort her to her new chambers."

"You sure?" the other guard asked.

"Don't worry," the boy said, "I've got this."

The other guard nodded, slowly pulling himself to his feet and hobbling away. The boy yanked Niki in the other direction, and Niki was left to wonder if she had just chosen to trust someone who was going to put her right back into prison.

"I'm Purpled," the boy whispered under his breath, "Thanks for playing along earlier."

"What are you doing?" Niki whispered back as they approached the palace.

"Helping you," Purpled muttered again, "The castle is too fortified for you to try to make an escape attempt like that."

"I'm sorry, I'll consider that next time when I have nobody to turn to and no other options," Niki snapped, "What do you suggest?"

Purpled smirked. "Disguises."

"Disguises, what do you mean..." Niki narrowed her eyes at Purpled. "You aren't actually a part of the guard, are you?"

Purpled grinned, but he still kept his voice to a very quiet whisper. "No, I snuck in."

"Why would you do that?" Niki hissed, albeit somewhat hysterically.

Purpled's face grew more serious. "Long story," he said, "I'm searching for my stupid brother, and I think I've nearly found him too, but he can wait for me to help Dream's favorite prisoners to escape."

Instead of continuing down the castle hall, they veered sharply into what looked to be a storage room.

Inside, Niki was astonished to see piles of different uniforms and armor. Niki couldn't imagine where they had all come from, and she could only hope that nobody was knocked out and stripped of their clothing.

"Me and my friends are all undercover," Purpled explained, "Pull one on and we can get out of here." He paused. "Actually, I should probably help you with that wing first."

Niki allowed her hopes to rise. Maybe this would actually work out.

Tommy was standing in a garden. Beautiful flowers surrounded him, and if Tubbo were there, Tommy was sure he'd be able to name each and every single one.

But Tubbo wasn't there for some reason, and Tommy was left to walk through the large gardens alone, wondering where everyone was.

Then, Tommy spotted a figure on one of the garden benches, and he sprinted up to them.

His heart skipped a beat.

Sam was sitting on the bench, but he looked so unlike Tommy had ever seen Sam before. He was wearing fancy clothing, and a circlet rested on his head like he was some sort of prince.

When he saw Tommy, he smiled. "Hi, Toms," he said, "Were you playing in the garden?"

Tommy nodded. "But then I got bored," he complained, sounding younger than Tommy thought he was, "But then I found you!"

Sam laughed, patting at a spot next to the bench, and Tommy quickly scrambled up to sit next to Sam.

"Where are Wilby and Techno?" Tommy asked.

"Classes," Sam replied simply, "You'll have classes yourself pretty soon."

Tommy scowled, sticking his tongue out. "I don't want classes."

Sam laughed again. "But don't you want to be the best prince you can be?"

Tommy shook his head vehemently. "I want to play." He leaned against Sam's warmth. "With you. Please?"

Sam ruffled Tommy's hair. "Alright," he said, "We can play."

Tommy grinned, feeling happier than Tommy was pretty sure he had ever felt in his life as he jumped up from the bench. "Okay! We're going to play the game where you're the monster trying to kidnap me, but I'm so big and strong that I stop you."

Sam's face looked sadder at that, but he didn't complain, instead dramatically making a face and saying, "Oh, Tommy. You look like such a cute little boy. I can't wait to eat you!"

Tommy shrieked as he ran away from Sam, who tackled him to the ground and started tickling him. Tommy slapped Sam on top of the head, and Sam stiffened.

"Oh no," Sam whispered, "It's too much. I guess, I guess, this is the end!"

He made a 'blegh' sound and faked died next to Tommy.

Tommy giggled. "Sam, you're silly."

Sam opened his eyes and smiled. "I try."

"No, you two are playing while I have to do classes?" Wilbur's voice moaned. Tommy looked up at Wilbur dashing into the garden.

He stuck his tongue out at Wilbur.

"One day, Tommy," Wilbur said, looking irked, "You will have classes, and I will not, and you will regret ever laughing at me."

Tommy laughed so hard that he had to shut his eyes. He could hear Wilbur and Sam laughing as well.

When Tommy opened his eyes again, the laughter was gone. He wasn't in a pretty garden.

Instead he was in the bedroom in Ranboo's house, and he wasn't peeping.

He wasn't alone, either.

Tommy could hear the simple heartbeat and the quiet breathing of whoever he was leaning against. No arms were wrapped around him, and Tommy realized he could get up and leave this person to sleep alone if he so chose.

Tommy glanced up to see who he was leaning against anyway.

It was Wilbur.

Of course, it was.

Tommy hesitated. He should probably get up, right? He didn't deserve the comfort that Wilbur had decided to give him. Tommy should just leave.

But then Tommy remembered the dream. The dream that had a happier world. A world where Sam was alive, and Tommy was happy, and Wilbur was nice.

Well, Wilbur was nice in this world too.

Tommy felt a few more tears slip from his eyes.

Tommy didn't want to leave Wilbur's warmth.

He wanted to stay.

Was he allowed to stay?

A small sob escaped Tommy's throat, and he felt a jerk from Wilbur, indicating he had woken up.

Now Tommy should definitely leave, but Wilbur wasn't making any angry remark.

More stupid tears escaped Tommy's eyes.

"I can leave," he whispered, because he didn't know what else to say.

"You don't have to leave," Wilbur whispered back, "I don't know what that man told you, Tommy, but you are deserving of love. You are deserving of comfort."

Tommy swallowed. He wasn't sure he believed it, but that was good enough for now.

"Okay."

Wilbur gently brought his arms around Tommy for a hug, and Tommy sunk into it.

When would Tommy get comforted like this again? When would Tommy be able to melt in someone's embrace.

He wasn't sure, but he wanted to make the most of it while it lasted.

Tommy hesitated. "Can Tubbo come too?" he asked quietly, "And Schlatt?"

"Of course."

Wilbur called for Tubbo and Schlatt, not moving out from underneath Tommy. There was the sound of loud footsteps, and then with a shrieking of hinges the door opened.

Tubbo all but thrust himself on top of Tommy, feeling like a warm blanket as he hugged Tommy tightly. Schlatt just sat down next to Tommy, gently running his fingers through Tommy's tangled hair, carefully undoing more knotted parts.

Tommy melted all the more. It was as though a terrible weight had been lifted off of Tommy's chest, and he could finally breathe again.

He was safe.

He was loved.

Despite the disaster that was the beginning of this chapter, i'd say that things are maybe working out

and im sudenly remembering i wanted a scene in this that i never wrote

sigh

anyway, thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments.  
<3

Comment or i'll kill purpled /lh /j

# Chapter 26

## Chapter Summary

Tommy gets to learn about cake and gets stuffed animals.

And he bonds with Ranboo.

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced murder, trauma, touch starvation, ptsd, self-loathing, discrimination, jealousy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Eventually, Wilbur led Tommy downstairs to Ranboo's kitchen.

Philza was standing at the counter, Ranboo standing next to him. They were mixing something in a bowl together while Technoblade watched from the table.

"This is going to be the worst thing I've ever seen," he stated dryly.

"What's going on?" Schlatt asked, staring at the scene with a mix of amusement and horror.

Tommy wasn't sure what was happening either. They were clearly making some sort of food, but Tommy wasn't sure what.

Then again, Tommy didn't know what a lot of foods were.

"We're baking a cake!" Ranboo exclaimed, smiling strangely widely.

Tommy didn't know what a cake was, but clearly it was very hard to make if it required mixing so many ingredients together.

He was still imprinting, so he leaned against Tubbo while Wilbur precariously sat himself at the table.

Tubbo gave Tommy a small smile, intertwining his fingers into Tommy's own with a tight hand hold. Tommy squeezed. It felt good.

Technoblade was eyeing Wilbur. "We should work on making a prosthetic today," he said, "So you can at least walk."

Wilbur's expression darkened, but he gave a short nod.

Tommy wasn't sure what he was supposed to do now. He supposed he could sit down at the table, but there was a way that Ranboo was smiling as he mixed the ingredients and—

“Do you want to help?” Philza asked after Ranboo gave the bowl back to him, looking tired.

Tommy froze. Was Philza asking him? Why? Sure, Philza was nicer than his father had said he would be, but that didn't mean that Philza was going to be this friendly, right? Was Tommy missing something?

“I want to mix!” Tubbo said brightly. He gave Tommy a questioning look. “Do you want to come with me to go up to him?” he whispered, “Or do you want to lean against dad?”

Tommy swallowed. He'd prefer to stay with Tubbo, but Philza was so intimidating, and what if he decided to kill Tommy—

No. He wasn't going to do that. Sam said that Philza cared about him.

Tommy took a deep breath, and for Sam's sake, he whispered, “I can go with you.”

Tubbo smiled, and together they walked up to Phil. Tubbo let go of Tommy's hand to take the bowl from Philza. Philza was taller than Tommy, and a small part of Tommy wanted to puff his chest up in a weak attempt to seem taller.

Instead, Tommy shuffled behind Tubbo, resisting the urge to bury his face into Tubbo's shoulder.

Tubbo stepped away from Philza with a quick thank you, and Tommy managed a nod. He watched as Tubbo began stirring the contents of the bowl, making the color of the food more uniform.

Tommy swallowed, his hands shaking. “What's cake?” he whispered.

Tubbo started so abruptly that he nearly dropped the bowl. Ranboo actually managed to knock over the bag of the white stuff, and everyone coughed as the white, powdery substance filled the air and settled on top of everything, like an overly thick layer of dust.

Tommy flinched. He shouldn't have asked; Dre—his father had never liked it when he asked questions. He should've just kept it to himself until he found Sam—

Tommy felt like he was going to throw up.

Sam was dead. He had been dead for months, so why was he still *like this*?

“You don't know what cake is?” Wilbur whispered, sounding like he had seen a baby killed.

“No,” Tommy snapped. He flinched at his own tone. “Sorry, I—forget it.”



“Cake is a food,” Technoblade said, completely disregarding Tommy’s last statement. He brushed some of the white stuff from his pink braid before continuing. “It’s typically a dessert. Kind of like bread but lighter and fluffier.”

Tommy wasn’t one-hundred percent sure what a dessert was either. He vaguely remembered Sam explaining the concept, but Tommy still struggled to comprehend the idea of getting a sweet with your dinner. Wasn’t that ludicrous?

Tommy had only had one sweet, given to him by Sam. It was delicious.

Tommy swallowed back the lump that rose in his throat.

Tubbo handed the bowl and spoon to Tommy, and Tommy took it, cautiously repeating the circular motion that he had seen both Ranboo and Tubbo do earlier while simultaneously still leaning against Tubbo.

It was hard. The substance inside the bowl was thick, and Tommy was surprised that Tubbo had even managed to do it as long as he did. Tommy felt like his arm was about to fall off if he did it much longer, but in a strange way, it was fun, and Tommy tried to keep at it for as long as possible.

“The stuff you’re mixing right now is the batter,” Philza explained.

Tommy bit the inside of his cheek, causing him to taste some metallic blood. They had answered his last question, and there was no punishment, so maybe...

“What’s inside the batter?”

He braced himself. One question was bad enough, but two questions would probably set them off, maybe call him stupid or just nosy and ungrateful.

“Eggs, flour, some sugary substance, yeast, water, butter,” Schlatt listed off.

“We usually use honey,” Tubbo added helpfully. Ranboo nodded in agreement to that statement.

Tommy frowned. He thought eggs were that golden breakfast food, but he didn’t see any of them sitting on the counter.

“Which are the eggs?” he asked before he could stop himself.

Ranboo spun around and pointed to the round white objects. Tommy frowned.

“You crack them,” Wilbur explained, “Ranboo, toss me one.”

Ranboo looked mortified. “What if I miss?”

Wilbur grinned. “Don’t worry, you won’t.”

Ranboo hesitated before grabbing an egg off of the counter and throwing it in Wilbur's direction. Wilbur caught it with ease.

"Allow me to demonstrate," Wilbur said, smiling kindly at Tommy. Leaning against the table, he walked over to where Technoblade was sitting across from him.

"Wilbur," Technoblade said slowly, "How does a demonstration have anything to do with—*Wilbur I will kill you!*"

Wilbur had smashed the egg on top of Technoblade's head.

A shocked gasp escaped from Tommy as Wilbur cackled. Technoblade was already on his feet, dashing across the kitchen and grabbing his own egg.

Ranboo grabbed Technoblade's wrist before he could throw it. "Please," he said quietly, "I don't have a lot of those, and I don't want to go to town to get more before I need to."

Technoblade frowned, deflating as the yellow goop continued to drip from his hair. "That's fair," he said, handing the egg back to Ranboo, "Sorry about that."

Ranboo smiled. "That's alright."

Tommy wasn't quite sure what he was watching anymore. Why wasn't anyone getting angry? Technoblade got angry for a few moments, but then he stopped.

They were all acting like Sam, which couldn't be possible, because the world wasn't full of Sams, there was only *one* Sam, and—

"Are you done mixing, mate?"

Tommy jumped, and he realized that he hadn't been stirring the bowl anymore, instead just standing stock-still as everyone else conversed.

"I'm done," Tommy replied, quickly holding the bowl out to Philza so that Philza could return to the other side of the room.

Philza smiled, and he took the bowl and spoon from Tommy. He took a few steps away, stirred the bowl with speed that Tommy couldn't fathom, and then returned to the counter. "That should be enough to put in the tray and let it bake," Philza said, "I think."

Ranboo nodded. "Yeah."

"This cake is going to be a disaster," Technoblade repeated.

"I can bake a cake," Philza said lightly.

"Dad, you have never made any food in your life," Technoblade shot back, "How could you possibly hope to make a good cake?"

Philza laughed. "Fair enough, but Ranboo has experience."

Ranboo shrugged. "I haven't done it in a few years," he admitted.

Tommy watched as they put the cake in what Ranboo called an oven, and then there was nothing left to do except stand there.

"We'll have dinner in a about an hour," Philza decided, "Unless, Ranboo, you want to have it now. Sorry, I forget this is your house."

Ranboo shrugged. "I think I'd like to go upstairs?"

Philza patted Ranboo on the shoulder. "Of course, mate."

Ranboo all but dashed out of the kitchen.

"Alright," Philza said, clapping his hands together and sitting at the table with Technoblade and Wilbur, "I guess now is the time to plan your prosthetic, Wilbur."

"He doesn't deserve a prosthetic," Technoblade said mutinously, crossing his arms, "He ruined my hair."

"You can wash it later," Philza said, sounding entirely unconcerned.

Tommy wasn't sure what to think of this conversation, and he curled further up against Tubbo. Now free of the cake, Tubbo held his hand again.

"Do any of us know how to make a prosthetic?" Wilbur asked, sounding almost sullen.

There was a somber silence in the room, and finally, Schlatt spoke up.

"I don't know how to make a prosthetic specifically," he said, "But I can do *some* wood work."

"And we can probably work together to figure out how the joints work," Technoblade said, "I mean, we had all those anatomy lessons."

Tommy bit the inside of his cheek again, resisting to ask what a prosthetic even was.

"A prosthetic is a replacement for a missing limb," Wilbur said. He must have noticed Tommy's expression, or maybe he just assumed that Tommy was stupid. "And I don't want to lean against everyone all day anymore, so it would be nice."

Tommy flinched. It was his fault that Wilbur had gotten hurt in the first place. If he had just gone back—

"It wasn't your fault." Technoblade was now staring at Tommy with a hard expression. "It was mine for not getting there soon enough."

"Absolutely not," Philza snapped, "If anything, I should've stopped Wilbur from doing anything like chasing down Dream in the first place."

Tommy flinched at the mention of his father's name.

"But if I hadn't, I would've never found Tommy," Wilbur snapped.

Philza didn't say anything to that.

"So, we're agreed," Technoblade said, "My fault."

"No," Wilbur said, "It was my fault, alright? I was the one who was defeated, not you."

"How about," Schlatt interrupted suddenly, "it was Dream's fault? Since, you know, Dream is the one who actually did it?"

Tommy struggled to breathe at the number of times Schlatt said Dre—his father's name, and Tubbo squeezed his hand. Tommy squeezed it back tightly.

"I think we should go upstairs," Tubbo said suddenly, "Maybe Ranboo would let us see his garden!"

Tubbo looked cheerful and the prospect, and Tommy himself didn't exactly want to stick around if they were going to be talking about his father. Especially since Philza was still in the room.

When Tommy was little, he used to have nightmares about what Philza might do to him if he found his way into his dark room. Usually, he'd kill Tommy.

This Philza was very different. Tommy wasn't sure if he liked it.

"That sounds like a good idea," Schlatt said, smiling, "Have fun, Tubs."

Tubbo nodded, and he dragged Tommy up the stairs, not that Tommy was complaining.

They stopped in front of the door of Ranboo's bedroom, and Tubbo gave it a loud knock.

Tommy hoped that Ranboo wouldn't be annoyed by the disturbance. He looked a little rushed to get out of the kitchen earlier.

The door swung wide open, and Ranboo stood in front of them, holding a strange creature in his arms.

"What's up?" Ranboo asked, looking a little tired.

"Hi!" Tubbo chirped, "I was wondering if we could see your garden. You could give us a tour!"

Ranboo's eyes brightened. "You like gardens?" he asked excitedly.

"I love gardens," Tubbo said, "And there's not much else to do, so I was wondering...?"

Ranboo looked much less tired than he did earlier, and he quickly stepped out of his bedroom, closing the door behind him.

“Of course,” he said, “I’d love to show you around.”

Ranboo led them back down the stairs to the front entrance of the house, and Tubbo chatted the whole time they walked.

“I have a garden back at home,” he explained. He frowned. “But we were moving, so is it home anymore?”

Ranboo looked enthralled. “Wow, I’d love to see it.”

Tommy remembered when Tubbo had wanted Tommy to see his garden, Tommy had refused.

Tommy leaned more against Tubbo. For some strange reason, there was an unpleasant sensation in his chest. It made him feel almost angry whenever he looked at Ranboo, and Tommy didn’t like it at all.

He wasn’t sure he liked Ranboo at all either.

“What are you holding?” Tommy asked suddenly, his voice harsher than normal.

Ranboo looked down at the strange creature he was hugging close to his chest. “Um, Enderchest?”

“It’s a stuffed animal,” Tubbo explained, “Like a toy.”

Tommy frowned. “What animal is it?”

“A cat,” Ranboo replied simply. He hesitated. “Do you want to hold them?”

Tommy hesitated. On one hand, he’d be accepting a gift from Ranboo, who he didn’t really like at the moment. On the other hand, he’d be getting to hold a stuffed animal, which looked very soft.

Tommy slowly reached his arms out, and Ranboo placed the stuffed animal in Tommy’s hands.

It felt softer than it looked. Tommy hesitantly hugged it to his chest.

Tommy was never letting go of this stuffed creature ever again.

“Can I keep them for now?” Tommy asked cautiously. He knew he was pushing his boundaries, but he really didn’t want to let go of the cat.

Ranboo narrowed his eyes at Tommy, but eventually he nodded, twisting his fingers together. “Okay. Please don’t drop them.”

Tommy nodded, squeezing Enderchest closer to him. He’d never.

They went out to the garden, and Ranboo and Tubbo continued chatting away, pointing out different flowers they knew. Tommy didn’t know any flowers, so he couldn’t say anything.

Ranboo paused half-way through conversing, moaning dramatically. “More weeds,” he complained.

“Weeds are the worst,” Tubbo agreed.

“How dare they try to kill my precious alliums,” Ranboo complained, pulling a black feather from his pocket.

Tommy gasped, taking a step back. His step back caused him to no longer be touching Tubbo, so peeps started emitting from his mouth. He blushed in embarrassment.

Tubbo stepped toward Tommy to spare Tommy from the peeping, and Ranboo crouched down like nothing was wrong at all, like he wasn’t holding a *black feather*, like he wasn’t crushing one in his hand, like he wasn’t—

Ranboo touched one of the weeds, and it wilted before Tommy’s eyes. Then, Ranboo pulled it from the ground, not even bothering to get the whole root out.

Tubbo’s eyes lit up. “That’s genius!” he gushed, “That looks so much easier than pulling them out.”

Ranboo nodded. “I use my black feathers *way more* than my white ones,” he said, “The white ones I might use for when I don’t know if a plant will survive the night, but it only lasts for thirty minutes, so it doesn’t do much good when I’m not fighting someone.”

Tommy couldn’t breathe.

Ranboo had used a black feather, and it was *useful*. It... had actually *helped*.

But... that wasn’t right at all. Black feathers were *bad*. They *killed*. They *destroyed*. They weren’t... they weren’t supposed to be helpful.

“Are you alright?” Tubbo asked suddenly, staring at Tommy with concern.

Tommy... Tommy wasn’t alright. None of this made sense. He was supposed to be a monster. He was supposed to be a killer. His power wasn’t supposed to do good things. His power wasn’t supposed to make people’s faces brighten as they saw how efficient it could be.

“I’m fine,” Tommy lied, still trying to comprehend what he just saw.

Ranboo shuffled awkwardly. “I, um, can I have Enderchest back?” he asked, “Your hands are shaking a lot.”

Tommy looked down, and sure enough, his hands were shaking so much that it did look like he was in imminent danger of dropping the stuffed animal. He quickly thrust it back into Ranboo’s hands, and before he was quite sure what he was doing, sprinted back inside the house.

He was peeping loudly when he stepped inside, so Tommy dashed up the room with the intention of hiding again. He found an empty room and slammed the door shut, breathing

heavily as he slid to the ground.

He didn't know what was happening, but his wings were shaking, and he could see his feathers, and they could be used for good, they could help, they made Tubbo happy, and that didn't make any sense, none of this made any *sense*—

There was a knock on Tommy's door, and Tommy jumped to his feet, swinging it wide open.

Ranboo stood in front of him, looking nervous as he held two stuffed animals in his hands. The first was Enderchest, but the other was a different creature. It was brown with white splotches on it.

Ranboo held the new creature out to Tommy.

"Here," he said, "This is a cow, and um, you can have him."

Tommy didn't understand. Why was Ranboo being so nice to him? Tommy hadn't liked Ranboo at all. Tommy hadn't trusted Ranboo at all. But Ranboo was still giving him a gift.

Tommy took the stuffed cow wordlessly, hugging it tightly to himself. The animal's fur was almost softer than Enderchest.

"Can we talk?" Ranboo said quietly, "Outside?"

Tommy hesitated, trying to think past the peeps that were still coming from his chest.

"You can lean against me," Ranboo whispered, "Or just hold my hand. I know you barely know me."

Tommy didn't like Ranboo, but he didn't like peeping more, so he quickly grabbed hold of Ranboo's hand. The peeping died down slightly, and Tommy resisted the urge to lean against Ranboo entirely.

"You want to talk?" Tommy whispered.

Ranboo nodded. "Outside."

Tommy hesitated. Ranboo could try to kill him.

But somehow, Tommy didn't think he would.

They went back outside, and Ranboo sat down on the soft grass. Tommy liked the grass, so he didn't have any problems with sitting down next to Ranboo. With one hand, he was still clinging tightly to his new stuffed animal. With the other, he was holding Ranboo's hand.

"You don't like me, do you?" Ranboo asked, looking nervous.

Tommy swallowed. "I don't know."

Ranboo frowned. "What do you mean?"

Tommy forced himself not to shuffle closer to Ranboo, instead staring up at the blue sky. “I just... you have a black wing, and you and Tubbo get along super well, but you’re also nice, and I don’t know what to do with that.”

Ranboo made strange sound. “My wing doesn’t make me evil,” he said quietly, “And you have black wings too.”

“I know,” Tommy whispered, “I—I am evil.”

“Who told you that?” Ranboo snapped.

Tommy didn’t say anything. His father had told him that, but apparently his father was the evil one, so could Tommy trust anything he said?

Tommy was so confused.

Ranboo sighed. “You’re not evil,” he said, “I’m not evil. Besides, didn’t you see that cool thing I did with the weeds? Most people would kill to be able to do that. You saw Tubbo’s reaction.”

Tommy flinched. “Have you killed?” he said quietly.

Ranboo faltered. “What?” he whispered.

Tommy shifted closer to Ranboo, unable to ignore the need to be close to human warmth, and he leaned against his friend.

“Have you killed anyone?” Tommy stared dully at a ladybug that climbed up a blade of grass.

Ranboo didn’t say anything for a few moments. “Yes,” he admitted, “But they were trying to hurt me.”

Tommy could understand that, he thought. Maybe. If Wilbur killed someone to protect himself, Tommy would just be glad that Wilbur was still alive. Same for Tubbo. Or Schlatt. Or Technoblade.

“What about—” Tommy swallowed. “—what if they were begging you to not, and you did it anyway?”

Not all of them begged. Some of them looked pitying. Some looked horrified. Some were crying. Some told him they forgave him.

“I—I’ve never done that,” Ranboo whispered, “Did you do that?”

Tommy only nodded.

“*Why?*”

Tommy shut his eyes. “He wanted me to.”



“Who?”

“My father.”

Ranboo jerked back suddenly. “*Philza* asked you to kill people?!”

Tommy shook his head quickly, surprised at how quick he was to defend Philza.

“Then who?”

Tommy held his breath. He shouldn’t say it, but Ranboo was asking. And if Ranboo was asking, maybe Tommy should try? Maybe this was like an exchange. Maybe Ranboo gave him the stuffed animal, so now Tommy owed it to him to tell him the truth about his father.

Tommy opened his mouth, but no sound came out. He felt sick. Could he even do it?

“Dre—” Tommy shuddered, cutting himself off.

Ranboo’s eyes widened. “*Dream?*” he asked, his voice a hushed whisper.

Tommy squeezed his stuffed animal and nodded.

“Is he following you?” Ranboo asked, his voice more high-pitched, “Is that who you’re hiding from? Is he going to come for me?”

Tommy didn’t know the answer. His father was trying to get to Tommy, but it had been enough time that Tommy had managed to hope that they were finally safe. He was trying to hope that his father would never find Tommy again.

Tommy didn’t want to think about Tubbo with only one wing.

“I’ll protect you,” Tommy found himself saying instead, “I—I’ll go with him, if I have to.”

“No!” Ranboo exclaimed, “Why would you want to go back to him?!”

“I... I don’t,” Tommy said, but he found himself not as convinced of the fact as he probably should’ve.

“You don’t sound so sure about that,” Ranboo said.

Tommy didn’t like Ranboo, but somehow, the idea of him bloody and beaten made Tommy sick. The idea of Ranboo in a dark room and chains around his wrists made Tommy want to cry.

“Sam wanted me to be free,” Tommy whispered, “So I don’t want to go back. But... I don’t want you to get hurt in the process.”

“You don’t know me.”

Tommy rested his head against Ranboo’s shoulder, blaming his imprinting. “Sam wouldn’t have wanted anyone to be captured or hurt.”

Tommy's eyes burned.

"Is—is Sam around?" Ranboo asked.

Tommy wanted to scream, but he didn't. "No," Tommy choked out instead.

"Oh," Ranboo said simply, "I know how you feel."

Tommy scowled. "No, you don't."

"My dad died too."

"Sam wasn't my dad," Tommy said, feeling suddenly very tired.

"Karl wasn't my biological dad either," Ranboo said, picking at the grass underneath them, "But he found me when I was a baby and took care of me like one, so I call him my dad."

Tommy frowned. "What... what sort of things did he do?"

Was Karl like Tommy's father?

"He protected me," Ranboo said, "He taught me things. He hugged me when I was sad. He told me stories. He raised me. You know, dad things." He made a sad face. "Or, you might not know, sorry, I forgot."

Tommy wasn't even worried about that though.

*He protected me.*

Sam tried to protect Tommy, even when he was dying.

*He taught me things.*

Sam explained what strawberries were, what the world was like, what the people were like.

*He hugged me when I was sad.*

Sam had given Tommy hugs, even though his father probably wouldn't have liked it.

*He told me stories.*

Sam told stories.

*He raised me.*

Sam had been there with Tommy since Tommy was a little kid, and he told stories from when Tommy was a baby, saying that Tommy used to call him Sammy.

"Oh." Tommy frowned, staring down at the stuffed animal—what had Ranboo called it? a cow?—in his arms. "Was—was Sam a dad?"

“Did he do those things?”

Tommy buried his face into his cow, trying to hide the tears that were trying their hardest to escape. “Yes.”

Ranboo hummed. “Then yeah, I think he was your dad.”

The thought was strange, and it should probably make Tommy feel overwhelmed with guilt. But instead, the only thing Tommy could feel was overwhelming rightness.

“My dad is dead,” Tommy whispered.

“Mine too.”

“I’m sorry for hating you.”

The idea of disliking Ranboo seemed silly now that Tommy had gotten to talk to him. Unlike Tommy, even with his black feathers, Ranboo had managed to live a life that wasn’t evil.

Ranboo patted Tommy’s back. “That’s alright,” he said, “You clearly had a lot of other issues to work out.”

Tommy wanted to protest, but he found that Ranboo wasn’t wrong.

They sat in silence for a bit, Tommy silently crying while leaning against Ranboo’s shoulder.

“So,” Ranboo said awkwardly, “Are you going to name your cow?”

Tommy frowned. “I don’t know. What are good names?”

Ranboo shrugged. “It can be anything.”

Tommy looked at the stuffed animal carefully, thinking of all the names he knew.

There was this one name that Sam used a lot in his stories. When Tommy asked, Sam said that he didn’t know why he liked the name so much, he just used it because it sounded right.

“Henry,” Tommy said quietly, “He’ll be Henry the cat—”

“Cow.”

Tommy felt his face get really hot. “Henry the cow. Sorry.”

“It’s fine,” Ranboo said, “I forget things too sometimes. Karl used to say that we were perfect for each other because we were forgetful. I think Henry the Cow is a good name.”

“Really?”

“Yep.”

Tommy smiled. “Henry the cow,” he said, “My very first stuffed animal.”

## Chapter End Notes

Henry was the name of Sam's dad. Sam just forgot that's why he clung to the name.

Thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments. <3

Comment or I'll take Henry, rip him to pieces, and burn him right in front of Tommy's eyes. /lh /j

# Chapter 27

## Chapter Summary

Niki time

Purpled does a goof

Wilbur gets a hug

## Chapter Notes

tw: referenced torture, ptsd, panic attacks, stabbing, blood, hostages, implied/referenced child abuse, crying

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Purpled quickly patched up Niki's wing before quickly leading Niki into a secret corridor.

"I got lucky to find this," he murmured.

"A servant's tunnel?" Niki asked rhetorically.

Wilbur had loved sneaking around these, much to the chagrin of the servants. Most of Wilbur's rambunctious ideas got in the way of their quick routes to get from place to place.

Niki could spot a red paint smear on the wall wear Fundy and Wilbur had thought they were being funny by leaving a bucket of paint to dump on an unsuspecting servant that they particularly despised. Instead, they had dumped paint on someone holding the laundry.

Wilbur had been grounded for at least a week after that event.

"Does it look like I've been in this palace before?" Purpled snapped. He sighed. "Anyway, there's a back entrance near the kitchens, and we should be pretty close to where that is. There are less guards over there, so hopefully we'll go unrecognized."

"*Hopefully?*" Niki hissed.

"Listen, I've got a limited amount of information I can work with at the moment." Purpled's grip on his sword tightened. "Bear with me, alright?"

Niki sighed, forcing herself to relax. "That makes sense," she said, "I'm just tense right now."

“Aren’t we all?”

They made it to the end of the tunnel, and Purpled carefully opened the door that was hidden to the view of most casual guests of the castle.

Fortunately, nobody was walking down that hall, so they very unsuspiciously entered the hallway and shut the door behind them.

Purpled got into a more professional looking pose, and Niki quickly followed suit as they marched down the hall and into the kitchens.

The kitchens were bustling full of people, and the old head chef was halfway through barking out orders when he spotted Niki and Purpled.

His eyes widened when he recognized Niki’s face, but he didn’t say anything. Instead, he just went quiet, casting his eyes down, and for a terrifying moment, Niki thought that he was afraid of her.

But then he winked in her direction, and Niki felt herself breathe again.

They made it to the back entrance without issue. Quickly walking across the small stretch of field to the wall, Purpled gave the guard stationed at the small gate a convincing grin.

“We’ve been sent to guard the streets, but we got a bit lost.” Purpled let out a nervous laugh. “First day.”

The guard narrowed their eyes at him. “Aren’t you a little young?” they asked.

Purpled grimaced. “I’m nineteen,” he lied, “I have been cursed with a baby face.”

The guard didn’t look remotely convinced, but they still opened the door to let them through, muttering something about child labor.

“That’s either going to be a point against Phil or a point against Dream,” Niki whispered to Purpled.

“Here’s to hoping that it’s Dream,” he said, “But the important part is that we actually made it unnoticed.”

“True,” Niki agreed as they hurried down the streets. A few citizens eyed them warily, and Niki couldn’t exactly blame them.

They shuffled into an unassuming alley-way, and Purpled handed Niki her old clothing back. “And here, we must part paths,” he said dramatically, “I hope we shall meet again.”

“Thank you.” Niki smiled at him, but it fell away quickly. “Are you going back in tehre?”

Purpled frowned. “Of course, I am. I need to go after my idiot brother.”

“What did he do?”

“A bunch of idiot decisions.”

Niki supposed that was fair enough. It wasn't exactly her business what Purpled's brother had done in his past.

“Just stay safe, alright?”

Purpled nodded, giving her a bow so low that she might as well have been royalty. “Of course.”

And then he disappeared into the street, completely gone from view.

Niki quickly pulled on the clothing purpled provided for her, noting that they were actually different from the ones she was wearing at the actual party. While she was wearing her nicest things at the party, Purpled had handed her something much more common.

Niki was going to have a much easier time blending in with the crowds now, however, so Niki was grateful for the change.

Now she just had to find Fundy and Eret, and then they could actually make a plan to deal with this issue.

Purpled was on a mission.

Hannah should already be getting Puffy out of the palace, so there were no concerns there. Charlie and Alyssa were busy gathering whatever news they could.

Hopefully, they would get the news of Purpled's death in a private place, so they didn't accidentally destroy their cover in their grief.

Purpled didn't want to die.

But he probably would.

Purpled had come to terms with that ages ago, though. He came to terms with that as soon as he saw Punz tell Purpled he wanted to introduce him to someone. He came to terms with that as soon as he realized that Punz was introducing him to *Dream*.

So yeah, Purpled knew that he was probably going on a suicide mission.

His friends didn't seem to understand that. They seemed to think that if they all worked together, if they all used the power of friendship, they'd be able to all win the day and stay standing.

If Purpled let them do that, they would all die.

And Purpled wasn't about to let that happen.

So, Purpled knew that the others would be distracted, and now was the perfect time to do the stupid and impossible.

It wasn't hard to make his way from the servant's tunnels to the throne room. It wasn't hard for Purpled to rest his head against the wall and listen for two terrifyingly familiar voices.

“—Puffy.” Punz was saying. Purpled hoped that meant Hannah was successful. “Nihachu tried to escape,” Punz was saying, “She's being escorted back to her quarters.”

Dream sighed. “The same measures as on Puffy,” he instructed.

Purpled very carefully edged the door open, only opening it enough so that he could see both Punz and Dream through the crack.

Purpled crushed one of his feathers and stared directly at Punz before snapping his fingers.

Punz didn't do anything at all.

Good.

Purpled looked back over to Dream before grabbing another one of his feathers and snapping.

No reaction.

And then Dream's head snapped straight toward Purpled's cracked door.

*Crap.*

He was going to die.

But Purpled had come to terms with that ages ago.

So, without letting himself have second thoughts, Purpled burst into the room, pulled his knife out of his belt, and tossed it straight toward Punz's chest.

Purpled didn't wait to see if it struck home. Instead, he sprinted toward his brother, launching himself on top of him so as to stop Punz from being able to grab any of his stupid white feathers to save himself.

Punz's face was one that resembled annoyance more than actual dismay or betrayal, which was a bad sign.

Purpled yanked his knife out of Punz's chest and spun around, throwing it Dream's face instead.

Dream stepped to the side, and the knife crashed against the wall.

Purpled winced.

This was not exactly what one would call *going according to plan*.



Well Purpled supposed that you couldn't have everything in life. At least he got to stab Punz.

"Children like yourself need to stop flinging yourselves into danger," Dream tutted, "You never win."

"Oh, good job," Purpled snapped as he saw Punz heal himself, "I suppose that makes you such a god, being able to dodge kids' knives."

Dream smirked. "You're mouthy," he observed, "I have the perfect job for you."

Purpled laughed, albeit mildly hysterically. Punz grabbed Purpled firmly by the arms, as though Purpled were stupid enough to try and escape. "You think I'm going to work for you?"

"I think you will." Dream nodded to one of his stupid guards.

Purpled craned his neck around to see the guard open the door to the throne room and reveal Hannah in chains. There was blood cacked against her head, and her vision was unfocused.

For the love of Prime.

"Hannah!" Purpled exclaimed in a moment that he would call a show of weakness.

The guard drew their sword and pointed it at Hannah's neck.

"Do this one thing for me, or I'll kill her," Dream said pleasantly, "And you, come to think of it."

Purpled gritted his teeth and glared at Dream. "I hate you."

Dream nodded again, and Purpled snapped his neck back toward Hannah. The guard was already resting their sword completely against her neck.

"Wait, wait! Fine," Purpled snarled, "I'll do this *one thing* for you, and then you're killing me and sparing her, got it?"

Dream looked more amused by Purpled's demands than anything else.

"I'm glad we could come to an agreement."

It took them about a day to get a rough prosthetic completed.

It wasn't the most beautiful thing by any means. As a matter of fact, it was really just some poorly constructed pieces of wood and a leather strap.

But it helped Wilbur stand on his own, and at the moment, that was good enough for him. When they got back to the capital, they could worry about getting a properly made prosthetic created by actual professionals.

At some point, Tubbo joined the prosthetic creating, saying that Ranboo wanted to talk to Tommy alone. Not too long after, Tommy and Ranboo came in hand in hand, Tommy holding a stuffed cow in his hands.

“This is Henry,” Tommy explained. He held out his cow for Wilbur, who was leaning against Technoblade tiredly. “He’s a cow, and Ranboo says he likes being petted.”

Ranboo nodded in confirmation.

“Good name,” Technoblade said, slowly reaching out his hand. Tommy didn’t flinch away, so Technoblade patted the cow a few times.

“He’s really cute, baby,” Wilbur said sleepily as he ran his fingers through Henry’s slightly worn but still soft material. He still hadn’t quite recovered from that impromptu nap he had in the middle of the day.

Tommy’s face turned bright scarlet at that statement, and Wilbur almost felt bad enough to take it back. But he didn’t. He loved Tommy; he was allowed to act like it.

“Anyway,” Tommy murmured, looking away, “What’s that smell?”

Phil clapped his hands together and got to his feet. “That would be the cake.”

“Oh,” Tommy said. His eyes were wide. “I didn’t realize it would smell this good.”

Wilbur accidentally made a sad sound at that, but Tommy only twitched.

“Sometimes Dad makes brownies,” Tubbo said animatedly, “Those smell *way* more delicious.”

Tommy’s eyes almost sparkled at that. “Really?”

Tubbo nodded so rapidly that it was like he was trying to make his head fall off.

“I liked my dad’s cookies,” Ranboo said shyly.

“Cookies are really good too,” Tubbo agreed.

Tommy hugged Henry close to himself as he leaned against Ranboo, his eyes belonging to a starving chick surrounded by well-fed siblings.

“Sam—My dad—” Tommy’s voice wobbled, “He made me hot chocolate once. It... it tasted really good.”

Wilbur didn’t want to pry, but his insides burned with curiosity. This was the first time he’d heard of a “dad” before. Dream was always “father”, and the fact that Tommy prefaced “dad” with “Sam” implied that Dream was not the person Tommy thought of as a dad.

If it was true that Sam gave Tommy hot chocolate, Wilbur really wished that he could give him a million thanks.

“I’m glad,” Wilbur said.

Phil pulled the cake out of the oven and sliced it up into pieces, putting the pieces on Ranboo’s wooden plates and handing them out to everyone.

Wilbur took a bite out of the cake and grimaced. The texture was too hard, nothing like that fluffy cake texture that Niki always created, and the cake itself was too *sweet* for Wilbur’s tastes.

Grimaces across the room seemed to indicate that others were feeling the same way, but Tommy had such wide eyes as he ate the cake so quickly that it was as though he were never holding it to begin with.

Tommy stared at his empty hand, and this time Wilbur could’ve sworn stars were twinkling in his blue eyes.

“That was really good.” Tommy’s wings curled up around himself slightly. His face asked a silent question.

Philza answered by giving Tommy another piece.

Wilbur smiled at that awe in Tommy’s expression. He loved seeing his baby brother so happy. He loved knowing his baby brother was experiencing things he should’ve experienced years ago.

It still made Wilbur want to cry.

Wilbur instinctively cuddled deeper into Technoblade, and Technoblade wrapped his arm around Wilbur’s shoulders.

Tommy sat down in between Tubbo and Ranboo, and seeing him curled up next to his friends tugged at Wilbur’s heart strings like they were nothing more than the strings of a guitar.

They were so *young*.

The sky got darker, and Phil told them all that they should go to bed.

It wasn’t until the next evening that anything of note happened.

While the adults continued working on the prosthetic, Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo had continued spending time out in the garden, and at one point, Tommy had sprinted in to hand Wilbur, Schlatt, and Techno yellow roses.

Phil had to cry over not getting one when Tommy was gone, apologizing for his outburst. Schlatt had patted him on the back and promised Phil that he was a good father, and that Tommy would come to see that sooner or later.

Tubbo began walking around with a stuffed bee, presumably not to be left out from Ranboo and Tommy’s stuffed animals. It was pretty cute, actually, to see them all clutching onto their stuffed animals like a lifeline.

Or it would've been cute if Wilbur wasn't so heartbroken that Tommy had never had one before.

After they had completed and tested the prosthetic, Wilbur finally hobbled his way to the bathtub, not having actually taken an actual bath during his stay with Ranboo. He was too distracted by Tommy falling asleep on top of him that first night.

The bath was... nice. The water was soothing against Wilbur's skin, and for the first time ever since this mess, Wilbur got a chance to breathe without being forced to lean against someone else.

Wilbur grabbed a sponge and washed himself off, trying to ignore the deep discomfort with only having one wing to clean.

Wilbur pulled himself out of the bath and put on a fresh set of clothes and his awkward feeling prosthetic. He picked up his dirty laundry ready to move on with his day.

Instead, a neon green feather floated from his dirty laundry and down onto the floor.

Wilbur stared at it for a moment.

*"Poor little baby bird,"* Dream's voice cooed in Wilbur's ear, *"Flew too far from the nest, didn't you?"*

And Wilbur couldn't breathe.

Wilbur wasn't sure when he started breathing so loudly it sounded like he was pleading for help. Wilbur wasn't sure when he collapsed to the ground. All Wilbur knew was that there was a feather in his laundry, and that feather was *his*, and Dream's feather had been in Wilbur's clothing this entire time.

Wilbur wasn't sure why this was upsetting him so much.

But suddenly Phil was bursting through the bathroom door and grabbing Wilbur by the shoulders, begging for Wilbur to talk to him.

Wilbur didn't say anything as Phil led him through breathing exercises. Wilbur forced himself to speak when Phil asked him what he could feel, see, touch, hear, smell, and taste.

And then Wilbur collapsed into his arms, sobbing like his life depended on it.

"I'm sorry," Wilbur gasped, "I'm supposed to be strong, I'm supposed to be better than this."

Phil shushed him, rubbing warm circles into Wilbur's back. "It's okay," he whispered, "It's okay not to be okay."

Wilbur shook his head. "Tommy, Tommy—"

"This isn't about Tommy." Phil's voice was firmer now, and he hugged Wilbur more closely. "Tommy hurting doesn't take away from your own pain."

Wilbur didn't believe it, but he only nodded, too tired to argue with Phil right now.

"His feather," Wilbur whispered, "His feather, it was in my clothes, it was there the entire time—"

Phil continued to sooth Wilbur, but Wilbur tensed when he picked the feather up from the ground and stuffed it into his pocket.

"I'll deal with it later," Phil promised, "Just know that I will never *ever* let that man touch you again, okay? *Never*."

Wilbur grabbed onto Phil all the more tightly and hated himself for it. "I'm not meant to be this weak. I'm not meant to be acting like a child."

"Wilbur—" Phil kissed Wilbur on top of his head. "You could be sixty years old and you would still be my little boy."

Wilbur let out a watery laugh. "Well you're so old that everyone must be tiny to you."

Phil laughed. "I'm not that old."

The conversation died down, and Wilbur just sat in his father's arms.

"I feel bad." Wilbur closed his eyes. "Tommy's gone through so much crap, and I can't handle losing one measly wing."

"Don't invalidate yourself," Technoblade said. Wilbur glanced up to see him leaning against the doorframe.

"You do it all the time," Wilbur snapped.

They didn't pretend that Wilbur didn't see Technoblade stay awake at night, watching Wilbur's window. They didn't pretend that Wilbur didn't know about Technoblade's nightmares.

"So that gives you an excuse?"

Phil held out his arm, and Technoblade sighed. "I'm only doing this for you," he said as he sat down next to Wilbur and let Phil hug him.

"That's very sweet of you," Phil said, "I'm so lucky to have three overwhelmingly loving sons."

Wilbur's chest hurt.

He hoped Tommy would one day be brave enough to join their group hug.

For now, he satisfied himself with Phil and Technoblade, allowing himself to be vulnerable just this once.

## Chapter End Notes

eight more chapters folks and then we are done

things are gonna speed plot from here

it'll be astonishing how fast i can speed this plot

thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments (no constructive crit, typos are fine) <3

Comment or I'll kill purpled, i would, i considered it earlier today

# Chapter 28

## Chapter Summary

Purpled and Tommy are the best duo

We love Puffy

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, **unreliable narrator**, fantasy racism, discrimination, hostage situations, fire, injury, ptsd, trauma, referenced manipulation, migraines

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It only took less than a day for Purpled to find the house hidden by a clump of trees.

Purpled really had to give to person who lived there credit. If Dream hadn't given him two feathers that apparently belonged to *Prince Technoblade*, Purpled really wouldn't have noticed this place.

Now to get inside without anyone attacking him.

On the bright side, it was the dead of midnight, and that hopefully meant that everyone would be asleep.

On the less bright side, if this person managed to cleverly hide their house, they probably weren't stupid enough to not have at least one person keeping watch.

But who knew, maybe Purpled would get lucky, and he'd be able to do Dream's stupid request, and then Hannah would be fine and Purpled would come back to see Dream and Punz with migraines.

That was Purpled's power. If he used his feather on someone, they'd have a barely noticeable headache that slowly built up until it was a migraine.

Purpled had been using it on the guards the entire time he had been sneaking around. He couldn't wait to see how many of them were hunched over or feeling miserable.

But Purpled still had a job to do.

His footsteps perfectly silent, Purpled snuck up to the house and glanced through one of the windows.

Prince Wilbur and Prince Technoblade were sleeping next to each other. Prince Wilbur had an arm draped over Technoblade, and they seemed completely undisturbed by Purpled's arrival.

Then again, Purpled hadn't gone through the window yet, but that wasn't the point.

Emperor Philza was sitting next to the two princes, running his hands in their hair.

Damnit.

This job would've been ten times easier if Philza were asleep.

That's alright, though. There was still plenty of night left to spare. Purpled would just wait in front of this window until Emperor Philza switched out with someone else. Shouldn't be too difficult.

Hopefully.

He'd have to make quick work of the person he switched with.

Purpled suddenly wished that he was dealing with idiots who didn't have anyone keeping watch. It would've been easier to have only three murders (excluding Punz) on his belt than four.

Then again, Purpled would really have preferred for there to only be *one* murder on his belt, that, of course, being Punz. But no, in typical Dream fashion, Dream just had to ruin things for everyone.

With a quiet sigh, Purpled leaned against the wall next to the window, readying himself for a long night.

Purpled had probably been sitting out there for about an hour when he heard a shuffling sound above him.

Instantly, all of the feather's on Purpled's wings went on end. Had somebody noticed he was hear? Were they going to kill him? That would be really not ideal, considering then there was nothing from stopping Dream from killing Hannah—

"Purpled?" a quiet voice said from the roof of the house.

Purpled spun around and craned his neck up to see a small boy sitting on top of the roof. His black wings blended in with the night sky, but Purpled would recognize those blue eyes anywhere.

"*Kid?*"

Tommy didn't say anything at first, just staring at Purpled as though Purpled was some sort of ghost. However, Purpled was deeply unsettled by the silence.



“Do you still have my cloak?”

Tommy flinched. “I lost it,” he said, “Sorry.”

Purpled shook his head. “Nah, don’t be sorry. It was a pretty crappy cloak.”

Not really. It was one of Purpled’s nicer cloaks, that’s why he let the kid steal it to begin with. But Tommy didn’t need to hear that.

More uncomfortable silence, but fortunately, Tommy got enough courage to speak.

“What are you doing here? Where are the others?”

“Well, um, Hannah’s a bit hurt,” Purpled said slowly, “But I’m sure—”

Tommy’s entire body seized up. “Was it *him*?”

Purpled frowned. How did Tommy know? Unless *him* was a completely different entity to Tommy, but somehow Purpled didn’t think so.

“Yeah, but don’t worry, I’m sure—”

“I’m sorry,” Tommy blurted out, “IT’s all my fault, I shouldn’t have—”

“Wait a minute.” It was Purpled’s turn to interrupt. “How is it *your fault* that we decided to go into the palace and rescue someone while I went on a quest to kill my brother?”

Tommy’s wings moved agitatedly. “Because I was with you, and I’m a curse.”

“You really aren’t,” Purpled said bluntly, “That’s correlation, not causation. This would’ve happened regardless, unless you somehow convinced my brother to join Dream—” Tommy flinched. “—and then told *him* to take over the castle after Emperor Philza mysteriously disappears for no discernable reason.”

This time, Tommy flinched so badly he fell off of the roof. He let out a small shriek, and Purpled hurried to catch him before he broke his neck.

“You really need to exercise those wings,” Purpled observed as he placed Tommy carefully on the ground.

“He’s in the castle?” Tommy asked quietly, sounding horrified.

Purpled frowned. “Yeah, haven’t you—” Well, Tommy probably hadn’t heard if he’d been spending his time here. “Actually, what are you doing here anyway?”

Tommy frowned, pulling himself to his feet. “I, um, well, he found me, but they protected me?” Tommy scowled. “I don’t know.”

That was the vaguest story Purpled had ever heard.

“So, Emperor Philza protected you?” Purpled tried to clarify.

Tommy shrugged. “Prince Wilbur did?” he offered hesitantly.

Purpled swore. “And you like Prince Wilbur?”

Tommy nodded.

Purpled groaned. He liked Tommy. He’d even go as far as to say he cared about the kid. Admittedly, Purpled had only met him once before, when Tommy had come to their campfire asking for a job so that he could get money, but he was a sweet kid. Purple didn’t want to kill someone Tommy cared about.

“I guess we’re doing this the hard way,” Purpled muttered.

Purpled walked back around the house to the front door, and Tommy followed him hesitantly. Purpled wasn’t sure if he didn’t know what was going on or if he just wanted to see how this particular conversation played out, but he was guessing the former.

With a sigh, Purpled balled his hand into a fist and knocked loudly on the front door.

The door swung open, and Purpled found himself face to face with none other than Emperor Philza himself.

Wonderful. Splendid. Fantastic, even.

“Punz?” Emperor Philza asked, sounding surprised.

“You are seriously sleep deprived,” Purpled informed the literal Emperor, “I’m Punz’s younger brother, Purpled. How do you know Punz?”

“Punz has a brother?”

“Yeah, but we’ve already discussed that. How do you know Punz?”

“He’s... he’s the captain of the guard,” the Emperor said slowly, giving Purpled a strange look, “Are you okay?”

Purpled, in fact, was not okay.

“With all due respect, your majesty, your poor judgement in Punz’s character has now caused your entire kingdom to be taken over by Dream.”

Tommy flinched again. Damn, Purpled needed to be more careful about that.

“It’s been *what?*” Philza demanded, his eyes blown wide.

Purpled sighed. “Can I just come in?”

Philza let Purpled inside and led Purpled into the living room.

“Boys, wake up,” he murmured, crouching down to wake up Prince Wilbur and Prince Technoblade.

Both of them shot up like they were suddenly shot, and they looked up at emperor Philza with fear on their faces.

“We’re not being attacked,” Emperor Philza said calmly, “I just have some bad news.”

Both princes didn’t look at all assuaged by that sentence, and they jumped to their feet.

“What is it?” Prince Wilbur asked instantly, leaning against Prince Technoblade as Prince Technoblade handed him some wooden object. Prince Wilbur strapped it to his back. Come to think of it, where was Prince Wilbur’s other wing?

“Your kingdom has been taken over by a neon green villain,” Purpled said bluntly, “I was sent to kill you guys, by the way, because my friend was threatened, but I like Tommy, so we’ll find a way to rescue my friend and not be forced to kill you.”

Wilbur looked like he was about to faint, if the way he was grabbing Technoblade’s shoulder was any indication.

“Where do you know Tommy from?” Prince Technoblade asked.

And apparently that one particular fact was the thing that Technoblade had decided to focus on.

Although, from the way Technoblade was staring at Purpled with the same expression one might have when they see a particularly nasty bug, he probably just didn’t trust Purpled at all.

“Met him about two months ago.” Purpled shrugged. “Gave him a cloak. Told him about my mission to kill my brother.”

“You want to kill your brother?” Wilbur asked, looking more and more horrified by the moment.

“Relax,” Purpled snapped, “He’s Dre—green blob’s right-hand man, and he wanted me to be a slave for green blob, and I said no to that and ran in the other direction before swearing revenge.”

And Purpled had just spilled his tragic backstory to the people he was supposed to kill a few minutes ago.

Damnit, this was what happened when Purpled was sleep deprived and stressed.

“Fair.” Technoblade snorted.

“Are we not going to talk about the fact that the *kingdom* is under you know who’s control?” Wilbur snapped.

“Boys,” Philza said quietly, but somehow managed to silence them instantaneously. Phil sighed. “I’ll go in and kill Dream myself. You two stay here.”

Technoblade bared his teeth. “Hell, no. I’m coming with you.”

“Me too.” Wilbur squared his shoulders.

“Absolutely not,” Philza said firmly, “I’m not letting you two endanger yourselves like that.”

“We’re adults,” Wilbur protested, “We’re allowed to take that risk!”

“I’m not losing a son again!”

Emperor Philza was breathing heavily from the outburst, looking like he might burst into tears.

Purpled started when he felt a small hand grab his own, and he glanced down to see Tommy staring at Philza with wide eyes.

There was the sound of thumping, and three more figures appeared in the living area. Two kids that looked to be Tommy’s age rushed over to Tommy, the green-winged one instantly hugging him and the dual winged one looking more hesitant.

Purpled resisted the urge to whistle. Dual wings, huh? Purpled wondered if that kid had used his Power yet, or if he was still saving it.

The adult with red wings just looked at the scene with concern.

“What’s going on?”

“The kingdom’s been taken over,” Philza said curtly, “By—” He glanced at Tommy. “—you know.”

The other guy swore. “how?”

“Because Emperor Philza made my traitor brother Captain of the Guard,” Purpled snapped.

He was still ticked that this was the first time he’d heard of it. This was the last time he ever went searching for his brother by asking about people with blond hair and white wings. *Apparently*, if Purpled had just said “Punz” it would’ve been a much faster process to locate him.

“I didn’t realize the treachery in my court ran so deep,” Philza admitted, a terrifying dark edge to his tone. Tommy’s grip on Purpled’s hand tightened. “I’m leaving to rectify it.”

“And I’m coming with you!” Wilbur scowled.

“Same.” Technoblade crossed his arms. “You won’t be able to stop us, we’ll just follow you.”

Philza looked away and shut his eyes, and Purpled was astonished to see an actual tear roll down his cheek.

“I don’t want to lose you two,” he whispered.

“You won’t,” Techno said firmly, “We can take care of ourselves.”

There was a moment of tense silence, and Purpled held his breath.

“Fine,” Philza bit out, “But you two stay by my side. We’re not getting separated.”

Wilbur and Technoblade nodded solemnly.

“I’m also coming,” Purpled said, “You’re not my dad so don’t even think about saying no.”

Emperor Philza looked like he wanted to protest, making a very twisted up expression, but he sighed and nodded. “Something gives me the feeling you’d sneak away as well.”

“Got it in one.”

“Schlatt, you’ll watch the boys?”

The one with red wings nodded, but Tommy scowled.

“I should—”

“No,” Philza said firmly, “I know you don’t trust me, Tommy, but believe me when I say I love you, and I’m not letting you go *near* that man.”

What now?

“But he’ll kill you.” Tommy was crying suddenly. “He’ll kill you.”

“He can try,” Philza said grimly.

Niki found Fundy and Eret at Fundy’s house, hunched over a map.

“Our plan hinges on the fact they don’t know the servant’s tunnels,” Eret was saying dryly.

“I’ve never seen guards at the tunnels,” Fundy replied, “And you know the crazy stuff me and Wilbur got up to.”

“What are you two up to?” Niki asked as she walked deeper into the room.

Both Eret and Fundy leapt to their feet, shoving the map off of the table and hiding their hands behind their backs.

“Hello, ma’am, how may I—” Fundy’s eyes widened, and he suddenly relaxed. “Niki! You’re alright.”

Fundy gave Niki a hug, and Niki let out a startled laugh. “More or less,” she agreed. She flexed her injured wing, which cried out in pain. “Slightly grounded at the moment.”

Eret frowned. “You don’t have anything to help with that?”

Niki sighed. “The boy who helped me out of the palace patched it up, but no feathers, no.” She mustered a smile. “So, you never told me what you were planning?”

“Well, we got wind of the fact you were captured,” Fundy said, his face turning red, “So we were going to... rescue you?”

Eret picked the map off of the floor, spreading it back out onto the table. “The success of our plan was admittedly questionable.”

Niki walked to the table and looked at the map. It was the same map that Fundy and Wilbur would use to plot their pranks out. A red line was dotted in the servant’s passage.

There was a sudden knock on the door.

This time, all three of them jumped, and Niki shoved the map under the table as Fundy slowly walked over to get the door.

“Hello!” Fundy chirped as he opened the door, “How are the waters?”

Someone with blue wings and pale skin stood next to an equally pale skinned individual with green wings, but a much lighter green than Dream’s.

“Very turbulent,” the green-winged individual said cheerfully, “Can we come in?”

“Who are you?” Eret asked instead.

“I’m Charlie, and this is Alyssa,” the one with green wings said, pointing to his blue-winged companion, “Our friend has been kidnapped, and our other friend, Purpled, is being forced to do Dream’s bidding.” Charlie smiled brightly. “Can we come in now?”

Niki’s heart skipped a beat. Purpled was already being forced to do Dream’s bidding?

“I know Purpled,” Niki said, “Let them in.”

Fundy sighed and let Alyssa and Charlie deeper into the house. As soon as they were a few steps in, Fundy shut the door firmly behind him, glancing at his already covered windows.

“Oh look, you already have a map!” Charlie said, pointing to the map Niki had shoved under the table.

“We really need to work on our hiding skills,” Eret muttered under their breath.

Fundy picked the map up *again*, and placed it on the table for all to see. “Okay, so we were originally planning to get Niki out of jail, but you can use this map to get your friend out if you’d like.”

“We were actually hoping for some help,” Alyssa said slowly, “You’re under no obligation, of course, but Niki was the only one we could think of, so we followed her here.”

Niki's stomach twisted at the idea of being followed. What if it had been someone on Dream's side instead of someone with good intent?

"Also, Hannah was caught trying to rescue Puffy," Charlie said, pointing to a room on the map, "Dream seems hellbent on keeping her hostage."

"I know Puffy," Niki realized, "Didn't she visit the palace a few years ago?"

Fundy nodded, his eyes wide. "Yeah, she was the one who helped us with our pranks every so often."

"I'm willing to help," Niki decided, "Purpled helped me, and I care about Puffy."

"Same," Fundy agreed.

"Mum won't like this," Eret murmured. He sighed. "But if it's true that your friend helped Niki, then I'll be happy to join you."

Alyssa wore an expression of surprise on her face. Clearly, she thought that it would be much harder to convince them. Charlie was beaming.

"Alright, we'll enact our plan in about two days."

Eret raised his eyebrows. "What's happening in two days?"

"Purpled's feathers should start to give half the guards in the castle migraines," Alyssa answered simply.

"It's one of those feathers that take a while to take effect," Charlie added helpfully.

And Niki suddenly understood why Purpled had kept snapping his fingers at any guards that they happened to walk past.

"That's kind of overpowered," Fundy observed, "Imagining wanting to get revenge on someone, so you just use your feather and a few days later they have a migraine, so you stab them."

"Imagine being Wilbur and having the ability to simply explode their face," Eret said dryly, "Or Niki, for that matter."

"That's not the point," Fundy said, his face red.

"Just saying."

"You made the fire?" Charlie asked suddenly, his eyes sparkling.

Niki stifled a laugh. "Yes."

"Can you do it again?"

Niki frowned, glancing at the fresh burns on her hands. "Only if we have no other options."

Puffy woke up to more screams.

*“Fire in the north tower!”*

*“Again?!”*

Again?

Dream must not be a very good ruler if people kept setting fire to the place. This had to be at least the second time.

Puffy sighed, hoping that the fire wouldn't get to her section of the palace. Because while a fire would be a great distraction, Puffy was a sitting duck. Her wings were clipped and she was chained to the wall. A fire was more likely to kill her than to help her

Who knew, though. Maybe the fire would melt the metal before it killed her.

Outside the door, she could hear someone complaining about their head. The other guard agreed.

That was a strange coincidence.

Once again, one that Puffy couldn't take advantage of thanks to the chain that was currently pinning her to the wall.

Puffy just hoped that the chaos would do her a favor and get rid of that chain.

Two loud thumps echoed outside her door.

And then the knob started turning.

Oh wonderful, another visit from Dream.

Puffy pulled herself to her feet, bracing herself for more mocking. He hadn't visited since her failed escape attempt with the unexpected ally she found in Hannah, and Puffy was sure he was going to talk about how Hannah was dead or held hostage now.

Instead, a guard with pink wings and another with red wings stood in the doorway.

Wait, Puffy recognized the one with pink wings.

“Niki?” she gasped.

“Puffy!” Niki exclaimed, “Oh my god, are you alright?”

“What are you doing here?” Puffy demanded. She didn't know Niki too well, but she did know she was a friend of Prince Wilbur, not to mention still a teenager.



“We came to rescue you,” Niki said simply. She turned her head in the direction of the hallway. “Charlie, stop admiring the fire and get over here!”

“Coming!”

A young man with green wings appeared in the doorway, and he quickly entered the room, crushing his feather in his hand.

“Fair warning,” he told Puffy, “This will be gross.”

He grabbed Puffy’s chain.

The once hard metal became a slimy goo that clung to her wrists. Puffy grimaced in disgust as she wiped it off herself, but it only ended up getting more on her hands than before.

Niki and... Eret, Puffy thought it was, made expressions of equal disgust.

“Helpful,” Puffy acknowledged, rubbing her hand off on her shirt, “Let’s get moving.”

They stepped out into the hallway, the smell of smoke already permeating the air.

“The closest unblocked passage is right there,” Niki said, pointing farther down the hall.

Puffy quickly followed them down the hall, hating herself for how weak she felt.

And then Puffy saw Dream walking down the hall straight toward them.

“When I saw more fire, I assumed it was another escape attempt,” Dream tutted, glancing around at the guards that had been knocked out cold, “When will you learn, Puffy?”

Puffy gritted her teeth, grabbing one of her feathers and crushing it in her hand. “I don’t learn.”

Dream laughed as he got closer, massaging his forehead. “That much is obvious.”

Dream began reaching for a feather, and this time, Puffy didn’t think. There were no guards, nobody to get in her way.

So Puffy sprinted straight toward Dream. Dream stepped out of the way, but his movement was slightly clumsier than usual, and Puffy’s fingers brushed against Dream’s wrist.

*Dream was sitting next to George, laughing at George complaining about princely duties. “I have to meet with the Antarctic Empire—do you believe that? While the baby’s being born?”*

Dream was resisting, stepping away from Puffy and bringing his hands to his head. Clearly, he did not appreciate his memories being tapped into.

But it gave them an opening.

Puffy grabbed Eret and Niki by the wrists and sprinted past Dream.

*George was crying. Sapnap was glaring at Dream.*

*The queen was shaking when she spoke, her black and white hair tied in a tight knot.  
“Dream, you have been charged for the kidnapping of our youngest prince. What have you to say in your defense?”*

They made it to the tunnels, but Puffy’s head was hurting more and more. Ideally, she’d stop the connection by touching Dream again, but obviously that wasn’t an option—

*“They say you’re a traitor,” Drista said quietly, “A monster, for what your power can do.”*

*“I’m not any of those,” Dream snapped.*

*“Then why did you kill him!?”*

*“He accused me, he was wrong!”*

*The argument was an escalated blur, ended by Dream using his feather in a fit of rage and accidentally slicing through Drista’s heart.*

*“—almost there,” Niki was saying as Puffy struggled to see.*

*Dream was standing in front of a man with gold and gray dual wings. He shook his head. “I already used my Power,” he said, “Might have accidentally kidnapped the prince while I was at it too—”*

*He died where he stood.*

Puffy collapsed to the ground, and someone hurried to pick her up.

*“Equal and opposite exchange young man,” an old, dual-winged gentlemen said, “In order for my Power to grant your immortality, you’d be condemning a newborn to death after every lifespan.”*

*Dream didn’t care. He just wanted revenge. Society had destroyed everything he loved. He’d destroy society.*

Puffy saw Hannah standing next to two other allies.

*Enderia came first. Newfoundland came second. The Antarctic Empire would be third—*

*King Watson had dual wings, and he used his Power to curse. “It will be impossible for you to kill me or a member of my family.”*

*King Watson nearly killed Dream. Dream fled.*

*“What’s wrong with her?” Hannah was asking.*

*Dream would over-prepare, so he could squish that Empire like a bug.*

Puffy was laid out on the ground.

*Children convinced to join Dream's cause.*

Someone placed a hand on her forehead.

*Puffy herself glared at Dream.*

Puffy gasped for air.

*Sam made ridiculous faces as he held Prince Thomas in his arms, causing the brat to laugh—*

The connection snapped, and Puffy shot up from the ground, finally able to breathe. She looked frantically around herself.

Dark walls towered over her, and it took Puffy a moment to realize she was in an alleyway. Everyone around her let out a breath of relief.

“Feather negating power,” a blue-winged stranger explained briefly, “Should’ve tried it sooner. Sorry.”

“That’s fine—”

Puffy blinked, and Alyssa, Hannah, and Charlie were gone.

Standing in their place were a very stunned looking black and white haired dual-winged boy, a blond black-born, and *Tubbo*.

## Chapter End Notes

### **IF YOU ARE CONFUSED**

- Puffy's power is the ability to tap into memories (this was stated before but just in case you forgot)
- Dream basically got falsely accused of a crime and it escalated
- the Power stuff will get explained in the next chapter
- also if you're confused about the very end of the chapter, fear not, next chapter will make it all make sense
- Thank you for reading these notes and sparing yourself a confused comment <3

Anyway

I redact my previous statement from yesterday, only five more chapters after this

Thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments (no constructive crit, typos are fine). <3

Comment or I'll have Dream re-kidnap Tommy and resurrect sam only so that he can learn he failed his child. /lh /j



# Chapter 29

## Chapter Summary

Phil does a thing

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, torture, breaking bones, child soldier, referenced murder, panic attacks sorta, flashbacks sorta, it might be dissociation, death, explosions

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy thought he was going to go crazy.

The morning after Philza, Wilbur, Technoblade, and Purpled left, they all sat down to preen each other's feathers. Schlatt was preening Tubbo's, Tubbo was preening Tommy's, and Tommy was preening Ranboo.

Ranboo's wings were shaking.

"What's wrong?" Tommy asked as he smoothed another feather in its place.

Tommy himself felt a warm rush go down his spine as Tubbo continued to arrange Tommy's own feathers.

"It's... been a while," Ranboo said simply. He sounded like he wanted to cry.

"Oh."

Tommy's peeping had stopped the day prior, so Tommy was no longer required to lean against someone to stay warm. Still, Tommy was glad they were still allowed to preen each other. It kept him warm inside.

The warmth felt emptier than it could've been.

Wilbur was out there. Wilbur was going after Dre—his father. Wilbur was going to die.

And Purpled.

And Technoblade.

And Philza.

Could Tommy really let that happen? Could Tommy sit there, enjoying the warmth of the preening, even though he *knew* that his fam—his friends could be getting hurt?

Sam's pale and unmoving body pressed against Tommy's memories, and it took everything Tommy had not to cry right then and there.

Crying was just weakness.

Crying did nothing to raise the dead.

Tommy took a deep breath and grit his teeth together. He needed to stay strong. He needed to find a way to save the others.

As he finished preening Ranboo's wings, his mind raced through different ways he could rescue them.

He could chase after them and cause them all to break their legs so they couldn't get to the capital.

He could lead them in the wrong direction.

He could... he could go straight to his father and beg him for mercy.

He could... he could hand himself over on the terms that the others lived.

Thomas could kill him.

Tommy's hands were shaking as him, Tubbo, and Ranboo all gathered behind Schlatt, his large red wings spread wide for them all to preen.

Schlatt turned his head in Tommy's direction, his face set in a frown. Instantly, Tommy's mind scrambled to know if he had done anything wrong.

"Are you alright?" Schlatt asked quietly.

Tommy wasn't alright. People were going to die because of him, they always died because of *him*, and maybe if Thomas just killed him, maybe if Thomas did what he was born to do, everything could *stop*.

"I'm... fine," Tommy forced out.

Schlatt wasn't convinced. "You don't look fine."

Tommy's shoulders crept up to his ears. "I'm just worried."

Schlatt smiled, and Tommy started when he gently took Tommy's hand. The touch wasn't bruising, however. It was soft. Safe.

“I know that look on Philza’s face,” Schlatt promised Tommy, “He’s not going to die until every last person who hurt his sons, who hurt his people, who hurt *you*, are dealt with, and then there will be no one left to kill him.”

It was a nice sentiment, but Tommy didn’t believe him.

“He’s powerful,” Tommy whispered.

Somehow, Schlatt knew he wasn’t talking about Philza.

“And yet he’s never bothered fighting Philza face to face,” Schlatt pointed out, “I think *he* might be afraid of the Emperor.”

Tommy blinked.

But that... that was impossible. Dre—his father was never afraid. His father was undefeatable. Why would he be afraid of Emperor Philza?

Tommy had been afraid, but that was because his father had... had been mistaken. He’d said Philza was an evil terrible person, but he *wasn’t*. He was kind. He made Tommy a cake.

Sam trusted him.

Tommy wished the world would start making sense again.

“Okay,” Tommy said quietly, not wanting to argue with Schlatt regardless.

“It’s going to be okay,” Schlatt assured him.

“Okay.”

They finished preening Schlatt’s feathers, and Ranboo asked if they could all go play outside. Schlatt agreed, so Tubbo and Ranboo quickly dragged Tommy outside to show him how to plant some queen anne’s lace.

Tommy tried to enjoy himself as they dug their hands in the dirt. Tommy tried to summon up the courage to use one of his feathers on the weeds like Ranboo did.

But whenever he played with the idea, he could only think of the one thing he could do to save everyone.

Thomas needed to kill his father.

Tommy needed to save them.

“I need to leave,” Tommy said suddenly.

Tubbo frowned. “What are you talking about?”

“I need to leave,” he said again, wiping the dirt off of his hands and onto his trousers, “I need to stop him.”

This time, Tubbo scowled, and Tommy flinched. “You’re running away again?” he demanded.

“I’m not running away!” Tommy protested, “I’m—I’m running toward the problem this time.”

“But you’re still leaving us,” Ranboo said quietly. It wasn’t a question, only a statement.

Tommy made a small noise of frustration. “I don’t want you guys to get hurt,” he said, “I’m trying to stop the others from getting hurt already.”

“And what if we get hurt because you went away?” Tubbo crossed his arms.

“You won’t.” This time, Tommy was certain. “There won’t be anyone to hurt you.”

“There’s always someone,” Ranboo said in that same quiet tone as before.

Tommy scowled. Why didn’t they understand? Why were they so insistent that Tommy stay? They were going to get hurt. *Everyone* was going to get hurt. All they had to do was let Thomas do what had to be done, and then things might actually be fine.

“Please,” Tommy begged, changing tact, “I need to do this.”

Tubbo was still frowning, studying Tommy’s face. “You really think you need to do this?” he asked.

“What are you even doing?” Ranboo demanded.

“I’m killing D—*him*, ” Tommy said.

It hadn’t worked the first time Tommy had tried, but this time, Thomas would wait with a new feather until Dream was completely dead.

The idea made his heart shudder a little bit.

But he needed to do it.

“You’re *what?*!” Both Ranboo and Tubbo spoke in unison this time, causing Tommy to jump.

“He’s going to kill them!” Tommy’s hands tightened into fists. “Wilbur, Purpled, Technoblade—he—he—” Tommy’s voice broke. “He already killed Sam. I don’t—I don’t want anyone else to die.”

This time, he was met with silence.

“I don’t want them to die either,” Ranboo finally said, standing up, “You guys have been... really great.”

“But what if you guys die?” Tubbo asked in a small voice.



“I’d deserve it,” Tommy said automatically.

Tubbo made a wounded sound.

“Or,” Ranboo interrupted, pulling three white feathers from his pouch, “We just use these.”

Tommy stared at the feathers. “Oh.”

Tubbo took a deep breath, standing up as well. “If you’re going, I’m going too,” he told them, “But... I think we should be more prepared.”

“They already have a head start.” Tommy thought about the hours they already had to travel. “They’ll get there before us if we wait too long.”

“Actually,” Ranboo said quietly, “I have an idea for that.”

Tubbo and Tommy stared at him. Ranboo had his eyes cast down to the grass underneath their feet, and his hands were clenched into fists.

“What’s the idea?”

“Let’s do whatever preparing Tubbo wants us to do first,” Ranboo said, “And then I’ll explain.”

Ranboo’s entire body hummed with anxiety as they re-entered the house.

Schlatt greeted them with a kind smile, pressing a kiss into Tubbo’s hair and ruffling both Tommy and Ranboo’s own.

Ranboo felt warmth bloom in his body at the touch.

He missed Karl.

What would Karl even say in this situation?

*“Your life is your own,” he once told Ranboo very firmly, “Your power isn’t the weapon of other people. If you don’t want to use it, then don’t.”*

*“But what if someone needs help?”* Ranboo had asked, only being seven at the time.

Two years before Karl died.

*“If you strongly believe that you want to help that person,” Karl said, smiling, “Wonderful. But if you feel guilt-tripped into it, then you have no obligation to do it.”*

Ranboo hadn’t quite understood what he meant back then, but he did now.

If Tommy had gone up to Ranboo had said, “I need your power to kill Dream, please and thank you.” It would’ve been one thing.

But Tommy didn't want Ranboo's help. Tommy wanted to do it all on his own.

And after years of strangers coming to Ranboo's door to kidnap him or beg him to use his power for them, it was nice. It was nice for someone who wasn't Karl to see him more than just a tool.

King Philza, who definitely knew what Ranboo was capable of, didn't tell him Ranboo owed him anything. The princes were the same.

And Tommy was right. They were off to face Dream. They could *die*.

And Ranboo didn't want to lose some of the kindest people he had met only just after having met them.

Still, as Tommy and Tubbo scrounged around the living area and bedrooms, searching for feathers that may or may not have fallen to the ground, Ranboo worried.

What if this was a waste? What if he was being dumb, using his one chance to grant any wish in the world and using it to help someone he had just met?

But... Karl had used his power to help the king. When Ranboo asked why, Karl simply said, *"Because I trust him."* Then he had smiled and scooped Ranboo up in his arms. *"Also, having that sort of power weighs on you. It was nice... knowing that I had used it for good, and now didn't need to worry about it anymore."*

It would be nice, Ranboo agreed. It would be nice to no longer lie awake at night, wondering when he would finally decide.

The three of them had managed to find a few of Technoblade and Wilbur's feathers in the cushions and in between floor boards, Tubbo deciding they probably wouldn't need his dad's feathers, and Ranboo already having king Philza's powers.

"How are we going to get out?" Tubbo asked, "Dad's watching the outside like a hawk."

Ranboo smiled grimly. "Don't worry. I have a solution for that."

Tommy eyed Ranboo, and it was nice to see there was less mistrust there than there used to be when they first met.

"You're explaining now?" he asked.

Ranboo nodded. "In my bedroom."

They hurried into Ranboo's bedroom, and Ranboo quickly shut the door behind them.

Tubbo and Tommy waited expectantly.

Ranboo gathered his thoughts.

"What... do you know about dual-winged people?" Ranboo asked slowly.

Tommy frowned. "They have... different colored wings?"

Tubbo looked just as confused as Tommy. "I mean, you guys are really rare. Is there something more?"

Ranboo took a shuddering deep breath. "Yeah," he said, "It, there's something else. That only dual-winged people are capable of."

It was almost cute how both Tommy and Tubbo's eyes widened at the exact same time.

Ranboo took a deep breath.

He could do this.

He hoped Karl was proud of him.

Ranboo reached into the pouch on his belt and pulled out two feathers, one black and one white. "These are from each of my wings," Ranboo explained slowly.

Tommy nodded.

Ranboo placed both feathers in his hand. "When I crush these in the same hand, I get a single wish. And with that wish, I can do whatever the heck I want. I can only do it once."

Tubbo's jaw dropped, but Tommy's expression quickly gave way to hopefulness.

"So you can bring back—"

Ranboo winced and held his hand up. "No," he said firmly, "I'm not bringing back the dead."

Tommy flinched, but then he scowled. "Why not? If you can wish for whatever you want, why can't you—"

"Because it's equal and opposite exchange," Ranboo explained slowly, remembering what Karl taught him, "So whatever I wish for, the opposite will happen to someone else."

Tommy's face slackened. "What do you mean?" he asked, his voice softer this time. Tubbo just watched with a quiet solemnity.

*"Promise me, Ranboo, that if I die, you won't try to bring me back."*

"Say I brought Karl, or your dad, back from the dead," Ranboo said, his chest feeling heavy, "It would kill someone else. And, chances are, since Karl is really close to me, someone else close to me would die instead."

Tommy's face flickered, and Ranboo could see the internal battle that Ranboo himself had had two years ago, when Karl had first died.

Did he really care? Did he really care that someone else would die if it meant his dad was back?

“Also,” Ranboo added, “It wouldn’t be the same person. When you’re supposed to be dead, coming back to the living world makes you detached.”

Tommy looked as though someone had taken all of his hopes and crushed them into a small ball and then thrown it into the fire. “Oh.”

“I’m sorry.”

Tommy looked away. “No. It’s my fault for getting excited.”

“Anyway,” Ranboo cleared his throat, “Typically, people use their powers for small things, although big things sometimes happen.”

He recalled a story that Karl had once told him about one of his only friends. Ranboo wasn’t sure if he believed it, but it was a cool example of the consequences of doing big things, even if it made Ranboo think too hard sometimes.

Tubbo and Tommy stared blankly at Ranboo for a moment, and Ranboo found himself wondering if they understood at all.

“So... if I wanted to grow a garden with the power,” Tubbo said, “Someone else’s garden would die?”

Ranboo snapped his fingers, fortunately with his free hand. “Yep!”

“Okay,” Tommy said, stuffing his hands into his pockets, “So... are you using your power to get us to the capital?” He hesitated. “Doesn’t that feel... small?”

“Small things can be good,” Ranboo said, “I don’t want our friends to die, and if you think you can stop that from happening.” He smiled. “And besides, since this is so small, the repercussions won’t be bad at all. Three people will just appear here.”

“I hope they’re not murderers,” Tubbo muttered.

Tommy gave Tubbo a scandalized look. “They’re not going to be murderers, are they?”

Ranboo shook his head. “Probably not,” he said, “Probably just going to be a different trio of friends who are semi-near our destination.”

Tommy and Tubbo both let out a breath of relief.

“So...” Ranboo took a deep breath, wondering why he felt like he kind of wanted to throw up.

Then again, this was a big moment.

“Are we ready?”

Tubbo hesitated. “Let me leave a note for Dad,” he said.

They waited as Tubbo quickly scrawled and apology and explanation on a piece of paper and left it on the pile of blankets for the nest. “Okay,” he said, “Now I’m ready.”

Ranboo looked over to Tommy.

Tommy clenched his fists and nodded.

Ranboo grabbed Tubbo’s hand, and Tubbo grabbed Tommy’s.

And Ranboo crushed the two feathers together.

It was... weird. A strange thrill rushed through Ranboo’s body, and Ranboo could feel his hair fly upward at the magic being released.

Ranboo swallowed. He just had to say it, right?

“Um, take us to the capital?”

And suddenly, they were outside, standing in an alleyway, staring at three other people.

Schlatt heard a loud shout of surprise.

A shout that decidedly did *not* belong to Tubbo, Tommy, or Ranboo.

The worst possibilities instantly ran through Schlatt’s head, and he instantly sprinted up the stairs.

Were his sons hurt? Kidnapped? Killed?

But when he slammed open the door to Ranboo’s bedroom, he found that it was none of the above.

Because his sons weren’t there at all.

Standing in their place was three adults, one of which looked very badly injured.

But Schlatt didn’t exactly care about that.

He ran toward the woman with blue wings and grabbed her by the shirt.

“Where. Are. My. *Sons*?” he growled.

The woman instantly raised her arms in surrender. “We haven’t done anything to your sons. We have no idea where we are.”

“There’s a note right here, though,” the man with green wings said,

“*Dear Dad,*

*“Tommy’s on a mission to kill Dream, and we decided to go with him to protect him. I know you’re probably worried, but everything will be fine. Ranboo has immortality feathers. Also, here’s Technoblade’s feather that you can use to track us down if you’re too worried.*

*“Love, Tubbo.”*

“Still doesn’t explain why we’re here, though,” the woman Schlatt had let go of said as she dusted herself off.

The green-winged man held up one of Technoblade’s pink feathers.

Schlatt grit his teeth. Worry already causing him to fly across the room, snatch the feather from the man’s hand, and search for one of Tubbo’s feathers in his pouch.

Schlatt was grateful for the note. He loved Tubbo to pieces.

And that was why Tubbo was going to be grounded for a year as soon as Schlatt made sure he was safe and sound.

For now, Schlatt was already tearing out of the house.

He had to get his boys.

Tommy blinked at the four strangers, trying to grasp his surroundings.

Tubbo was still holding tightly to his hand, and Tommy squeezed it.

“Puffy?” Tubbo gasped.

The woman with white wings sitting on the ground stared at Tubbo as though he were a ghost. “*Tubbo?* What are you doing here, where’s Schlatt—”

They were going to stop him. They were going to stop Thomas from doing what he needed to do, and then he would be too late, and then everyone would be *dead*.

Tommy yanked his hand out of Tubbo’s and broke into a run, sprinting straight toward the large building surrounded by large walls.

Tommy tried not to think about how crowded everything was in this city as he dodged people in the streets. Tommy tried not to think of the huge buildings towering above him, of the people crying out in surprise as he ran past.

Next to him, Ranboo and Tubbo appeared, and Tommy realized they must have flown to him. Dark shadows were flying right above him, and Tommy glanced up to see the red-winged and orange-winged people from the alley.

Unthinkingly, Tommy grabbed one of Wilbur’s feathers from his pocket, crushed it, and looked right between the two people’s wings before snapping his fingers.

The two people cried out in pain as they crashed to the ground, and Tommy could hear a few screams from the crowd.

Puffy and a pink-winged person were still chasing after them. Puffy was crying out Tubbo's name, but for some reason she wasn't flying.

Tommy wasn't going to complain.

The guards at the palace wall were distracted by the commotion that the explosion had brought, and Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo were able to push through them.

"Wait!" one of them called after them, but they were already sprinting to the front entrance, where two guards were waiting.

Tubbo only grinned, and he pulled out one of Wilbur's feathers himself, snapping his fingers and causing both guards to collapse to the ground.

Ranboo made a distressed noise. Tubbo only shrugged.

"They were working for you know who," he said simply.

Tommy supposed he had a good point.

For some odd reason, there weren't many guards in the halls, and Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo were able to sneak past them. A lot of them were clutching their heads, moaning about some sort of headache. Tommy wondered if there was a weird sickness going around.

They were half-way down some fancy hallway when they heard a voice.

"Sir, there have been frequent complaints about headaches—"

"My brother," an authoritative voice sighed, "The Emperor is distributing feathers for their headaches, make sure they're at their stations and attentive."

Tommy grabbed Tubbo by the arm and pointed to the potted bush next to him, and understanding lit up in Tubbo's eyes. He quickly grabbed one of his own green feathers and used his magic on the bush, causing it to be ridiculously oversized.

Tubbo, Tommy, and Ranboo all jumped into the bush just as a richly dressed guard and someone in a normal uniform came into view.

"How is the Emperor?" the lower-ranked individual asked.

Tommy held his breath as the two got closer and closer to their bush, trying to ignore the way Ranboo's elbows dug into his side.

"He's recovered and back in his throne room," the fancy guard said curtly, "It's unfortunate that the traitor got away, but she's likely still in the city. Once we deal with... this headache situation, send a search for her."

They got closer and closer, and suddenly they stopped right in front of Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo's way too oversized bush.

Had they seen him? Was it all over?

"What is wrong with this bush?"

"I don't know sir; the servants must've neglected it."

"Odd."

And then they continued walking by like nothing had happened.

All three of them let out a silent breath of relief.

They waited for the two guards to be completely out of view before clumsily falling out of the bush.

"Do any of us know where the throne room is?" Tubbo whispered, his voice shaking. His face was much paler than usual.

Tommy and Tubbo both shook their heads.

"We need to find one of *his* feathers," Tommy whispered, thinking of one of the pink feathers in his pocket.

The two nodded, and they continued silently dashing down the hallway, searching for a neon green feather on the polished floors.

Tommy still struggled to comprehend the sheer enormity of the castle he was in, with sloping arches and—

No. He had to focus. Thomas had a job to do.

Tommy wasn't sure how long they searched before Ranboo stooped down and grabbed one with a victorious smile. Tommy didn't smile back, but he took it with a nod, quickly crushing Technoblade's pink feather and holding tightly onto *his* green one.

A golden thread suddenly appeared and looped its way down the halls.

Ranboo pressed white feathers into Tommy and Tubbo's hands. Tommy crushed it into his other hand, the new vitality humming underneath his skin.

And then Tommy started sprinting, following the gold thread that lead to *him*.

And then they were in front of the freshly damaged ornate doors to what Tommy assumed was the throne room.

The guards Tubbo had knocked out with Wilbur's last feather were sprawled on the floor, and Tommy hoped that they weren't dead.



“Please, don’t come in with me,” Tommy whispered, “Please.”

Tommy’s heart sunk when Tubbo scowled, grabbing Tommy’s hand. “And let you die?” he demanded, “I don’t think so.”

Ranboo nodded in agreement, grabbing Tommy’s other hand.

“We’re not leaving,” he said.

Tommy wasn’t breathing anymore, and tears began pressing their way from his eyes.

“Please.”

Tubbo and Ranboo both shook their heads.

That’s alright. Tommy took a deep breath. That’s alright. Thomas would just kill him before he could hurt the others.

It felt like an empty hope.

But Tommy knew that there was no hope, so with a shuddering breath, Tommy squeezed Tubbo and Ranboo’s hands one last time before dropping *his* feather.

The golden thread disappeared.

Tommy very carefully took one of his black feathers from his pocket before carefully laying his hands against the fancy handles to the doors.

It was time.

Purpled had successfully led Phil and his sons to the gates of his city. Phil frowned at the terrible sensation of dread that was churning in his gut.

He had the same sensation the night Thomas was kidnapped.

And then Schlatt came careening toward them.

Instantly, worry spiked in Phil’s chest. Where were the kids? Why was Schlatt here?

“The kids,” Schlatt gasped instantly upon landing in front of them. He was swaying on his feet, looking as though he had pushed himself to his limit just to get to them in time. “The kids, they left to kill Dream, I thought they’d be with you—”

“They’re not with us,” Wilbur gasped, his eyes blown wide in panic.

Schlatt collapsed to the ground, definitely having pushed himself to his limit.

And Phil was already in the sky, shooting toward his palace.

He didn't know why he thought the kids could have gotten there before them, but if Schlatt managed to get to them when he did, anything was possible.

His gut was still churning.

Thomas thrust the doors open, his heart stuttering when he saw *him* sitting on the throne in the throne room.

For some reason, the sight filled Tommy with more terror than the real Philza ever had.

His father stood up from his throne, his head tilted. No other guards were in the room. It made sense. His father didn't exactly *need* to be guarded.

"Thomas," he said, his voice one of surprise, "I have to admit, I didn't expect the visit." He tilted his head in the other direction. "And friends." He nodded to Tubbo and Ranboo, although the corners of his father's mouth twitched.

Tubbo tried to reach for Tommy's hand, but Tommy quickly yanked his hand away before Tubbo got himself killed.

Tommy didn't say anything, instead walking straight toward *him*.

"No greeting?" his father asked, "Thomas, I thought I raised you better than that."

Tommy couldn't breathe. A chain was tied around his neck as he stared up at his father as he walked closer, and closer, and closer.

An apology was at the tip of his tongue, but Tommy forced it back. He wasn't there to apologize.

He glanced at Tubbo and Ranboo, but their eyes were blown wide, probably as terrified as Tommy felt.

"I'm... I'm not..."

Tommy wasn't even sure what he was trying to say.

His father stopped walking just out of reach of Tommy, a stern frown on his face. "You're not what, Thomas?"

"I'm not your son!" Tommy suddenly shouted before he could stop himself.

At his outburst, the room became glass. Tubbo and Ranboo didn't move at all, and his father—no, not his father, had his mouth slightly agape. Tommy's own heart was racing, and he wondered what had possessed him to say that.

The room was glass, and Tommy waited for it all to shatter

“Thomas,” Dre—*he* said, his voice promising pain, “Think about what you’re saying.”

Tommy almost didn’t say anything. Thomas almost begged for mercy.

But Sam’s face came to the surface, and a surge of courage rushed through Tommy like the warm cup of hot chocolate Sam had given him all those years ago.

“Sam—Sam was more of a father to me than *you* ever were,” Tommy gasped, “And—” Thomas squared his shoulders, taking a step toward his father’s killer. “I’m going to kill you.”

For some reason, his father’s killer didn’t look phased. “You’re going to kill me, Thomas?” he asked softly, “After everything I’ve done for you?”

“Don’t listen to him,” Ranboo suddenly piped up.

“He’s hurt you,” Tubbo whispered.

They both sounded terrified out of their minds, but the sentiment filled Tommy’s chest with warmth.

His father’s killer gave Ranboo and Tubbo a disdainful sneer. “Hiding behind more people, Thomas?” he asked, “Do you want them to die too?”

“They’re not going to die,” Thomas said, suddenly feeling more detached as he took another step toward his father’s killer. “I’m going to kill you. And if you have one of those feathers that stop it from working, I’ll kill you again. And again. And—” Tommy’s voice choked off. “—you’ll never hurt anyone I love ever again.”

Dream laughed. “You don’t love me, Thomas?”

Tommy stopped short.

A small, traitorous part of Tommy’s heart knew the answer.

He would be lying if he said he didn’t love the masked monster standing in front of him.

And Tommy didn’t know if he hated himself for it or not.

But... it didn’t matter. His father—his father’s killer was bad. He hurt people. He hurt Tommy. He... he caused death.

Thomas *had* to kill him.

Thomas grit his teeth and readied himself to lunge at Dream.

And then a loud crash penetrated the room. Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo jumped. His father’s killer took a step back.

Thomas didn’t dare turn around, but he didn’t need to.

“That’s enough,” Emperor Philza’s voice echoed in the room. The cold fury chilled the walls, and Tommy wondered if they were all going to be killed.

“Philza,” his father’s killer said curtly.

“*Dream.*”

Tommy flinched at Philza’s tone.

And suddenly Philza was standing right next to Tommy, holding a nightshade bud out toward Tommy.

Tommy didn’t know what was going on.

“You should *never* feel like you have to kill for us,” Philza said firmly, “Even to protect us.”

But no, Thomas had to—

“It’s our job to protect you, Tommy,” Philza said, “Not the other way around.”

There was such kindness in Philza’s eyes, but nothing he was saying was making any sense—

“Just touch the nightshade.” Philza’s voice was still gentle, even with the command. “I’ll deal with him myself.”

And Tommy....

Tommy let his fingers brush against the nightshade. It blackened in Philza’s hand.

Philza’s smile was so brilliant that Tommy—

“Thomas,” Dream said suddenly, “Remind me of the punishments.”

And Thomas’s entire body seized up, he looked down at the floor, tucking his wings behind him.

“No food for—”

“Tubbo, Ranboo,” Philza instructed, interrupting Thomas, “Get Tommy out of the room.”

And then Tubbo and Ranboo were grabbing Tommy by the arm, dragging him out of the throne room as Thomas continued reciting, because nobody had told him to stop.

“Chains for trying to attack you, because a feral monster should be chained—”

Was Thomas going to be chained? Was Thomas going to have to feel the cold bite of chains around his wrists?

And then the throne room doors were closed shut, and Thomas’s father was out of sight.

Ranboo and Tubbo were hugging Thomas, and Thomas...

Tommy sunk into the warmth, shaking.

“I failed,” Tommy whispered in horror.

No food for a few days.

“You didn’t fail,” Tubbo whispered, “I’m sorry I wasn’t a help.”

“You did great,” Ranboo said quietly, “You stood up to him. That... that was really cool.”

Philza said Tommy didn’t have to kill. Philza said that no matter what, Tommy was the one who should be protected.

Tommy didn’t understand.

And now his father’s killer would kill Philza.

And Tommy burst into sobs.

Philza’s fury was an all-consuming fire. It ate up his chest, spreading from his wings and even filling the room with his furious heat.

Tommy’s last words before Ranboo and Tubbo got him out rang in Philza’s ears over and over and *over* again.

“Chains for trying to attack you,” Philza repeated to Dream, who was standing in a self-confident position, “Because a feral monster deserves to be chained.”

The rage in Philza’s voice was enough to burn entire mountains.

Dream’s smile was all teeth. “I can’t imagine how you must be feeling right now, Philza. Knowing that while you were living cozy in your castle, I was raising your son.”

“You weren’t *raising* him,” Phil snapped, “You were torturing him.”

Dream laughed. “Maybe I was.”

Phil reached into his feather pouch and pulled out a single neon feather.

“Any last words?” Philza asked.

Dream pulled a white feather from his own pouch and crushed it in his hand.

Phil laughed dangerously, and he pocketed his green feather, pulling out one of Wilbur’s. “Oh, Dream. After kidnapping my youngest, raising him to believe he’s some sort of irredeemable monster, torturing one of my eldest and stealing his *wing*, and traumatizing my other eldest at a very young age... do you really think that feather can save you?”

Phil crushed Wilbur’s feather in his hand, stared straight at Dream’s chest, and snapped.

Dream stumbled backwards, letting out a guttural noise as his temporary immortality stitched his burns back together. He pulled out his own feather, looking in Philza as he got ready to snap.

Philza dropped to the ground right before Dream's fingers connected.

There was a loud shattering sound behind Phil where the door should be, and Philza instantly pulled himself to his feet, sprinting toward Dream.

Dream had clearly not prepared himself for such a direct attack, and he moved to spin out of the way.

But Philza had been trained for this. Philza had practiced for hours upon hours on end to be able to win against even the swiftest of combatants.

Phil ducked down, grabbed Dream's ankle, and *pulled*.

Dream stumbled backwards, and Philza pushed him fully to the ground.

Dream reached for another feather, but Philza grabbed both of his wrists and pinned them to the ground.

Dream opened his mouth, presumably to call for help, but Philza slammed his knee into Dream's teeth before he could make a sound.

"We are going to sit here," Philza growled, "Until that damn immortality fades away. And then... I'll kill you."

Thirty minutes later, Philza twisted Dream's wrists with two *cracks*.

Dream let out a cry of pain.

The wrists didn't heal.

Philza smiled grimly, pulling out Dream's own feather. "My son told me what your power is capable of," he said, "After you gave a lovely display when *torturing* him."

"You're going to torture me?" Dream asked, sounding almost pleasant.

Internal incisions, Wilbur had shakily explained.

Philza laughed. "Trust me," he whispered, "I'd love to spend *days* torturing you like you tortured my sons."

Dream laughed. "Then why don't you?"

"Because I don't want to waste my time on a monster like you."

Dream started laughing hysterically. He must've known the end was near. "Do you remember Sam?" he asked, "That boy—"

Philza didn't listen.

Instead, Phil looked straight at Dream's chest and imagined his heart. He crushed the feather and snapped.

And Dream collapsed backwards.

Dead.

## Chapter End Notes

Bamf Philza the beloved :D

10k recovery chapters incoming <333333

If you're still confused about the dual winged power, just reread this chapter because i tried to put it in very blunt terms. i'm sorry but i'm tired it's like 9pm.

Thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments (no constructive crit unless i'm offensive, typos are fine). <3333

Comment or I'll bring dream back from the dead and kill phil in the process.

Also don't be upset with ranboo and tubbo for not talking tommy out of the plan they are young children.

# Chapter 30

## Chapter Summary

Tommy begins recovering.

He gets to read Sam's last words to him.

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced murder, ptsd, trauma, discrimination, self-loathing, low self-esteem, touch starvation, referenced death, dead bodies, loneliness, grief

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy wasn't sure how long he sat in Ranboo and Tubbo's arms before Wilbur came sprinting into view.

"Tommy!"

Wilbur's voice sounded more anguished than Tommy had ever heard it, and he barely had time to react before Wilbur was on the ground, wrapping Tommy up in a warm hug.

Next to him, Tommy was dimly aware of Schlatt doing the same thing to Tubbo, all but collapsing onto his son.

Tommy didn't do anything for a moment in Wilbur's arms, just sitting there as he continued to shake.

"He's going to die," Tommy whispered, "I tried to stop him, and he's still going to die."

Technoblade approached them. "Who's going to die?" he asked. His voice was hard, and Tommy flinched.

"*Phil.*" Tommy's voice cracked, becoming a high-pitched whine. "I'm sorry, I tried to stop him, I *tried*—"

Wilbur brought his hand to Tommy's hair. "It's okay, you did wonderfully baby, you're fine \_\_\_"



Tommy didn't understand. He didn't do wonderfully. Phil was going to die from Tommy's inability to be able to kill his father's killer himself.

"I failed—" Tommy tried to tell Wilbur.

"No, no, you did so well," Wilbur insisted, as though he had been there to begin with.

And it was as though a bubble had burst inside Tommy's chest, and Tommy was suddenly drowning. Drowning in his failure. Drowning in this love that he didn't *deserve*—

He was crying, and Wilbur was gently rocking him back and forth.

And Tommy pressed his face into Wilbur's shoulder, his trembling fingers wrapping themselves around Wilbur's shirt.

"I'm sorry," he sobbed, his voice muffled, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry—"

"There's nothing to be sorry for." Wilbur buried his face into Tommy's hair. "Thank you for being alive."

It had taken longer than Techno would've preferred to get to the castle. It was too much time for something bad to happen. Too much time where Techno wasn't there to protect anyone.

So when Tommy began sobbing about Phil, Technoblade trusted Wilbur to take care of his little brother while he dashed into the throne room.

His eyes landed on Phil standing in the center of the room, and relief filled Technoblade like the magic from a crushed feather.

"Dad!"

Technoblade dashed toward him, and Phil turned around, a dark expression on his face fading away to a warm smile.

"Hey, mate."

Technoblade looked at the body lying at Phil's feet. "Is that..."

"Yeah." Phil's expression darkened. "He's not touching you or your brothers or *any child* ever again."

Dream was dead. After all this time, Dream was dead.

"He's dead," Technoblade murmured.

"He's dead."

Technoblade stared at Dream's body, feeling a strange energy thrum through him. Dream was dead, but... surely, he wasn't. Surely, he was going to stand up and make everyone's life a

living hell again as he laughed about the fun of it all. Surely—

But Dream didn't move.

Dream was dead, and Phil was alive.

"You're alive," Techno finally said, because he had no idea how to put his relief and exhaustion into words, "You didn't die."

"Oh, mate," Phil said softly. Technoblade didn't resist when Phil wrapped him in an embrace, instead moving to return the motion.

It felt good to know that was alive enough to do this. It felt good to know that Dream hadn't been the one standing over Phil's dead body.

"I'm okay," Phil whispered, rubbing his hand up and down Techno's back like he was a child, "I'm okay, Tech."

"You could've died," Techno whispered, squeezing Phil harder, "You could've died, and then —"

"But I didn't die," Phil said, "And now he's gone."

And now he's gone.

Technoblade glared down at Dream's dead body. "He deserved worse."

"Definitely," Phil agreed. He frowned. "Is Tommy still out there?"

Technoblade nodded. "Wilbur has him."

Phil relaxed slightly at that. "Good," he said, "Good, he trusts Wilbur."

*He doesn't trust me* went unspoken.

"He'll trust you eventually," Techno tried to reassure, "You're... you're the best."

Phil laughed weakly. "Thank you, Tech." He rubbed Techno's back one last time before nodding his head toward the door. "Shall we reunite ourselves?"

Techno sighed but nodded. Wilbur would want to know that Phil was alive as much as Techno had.

And it might save Tommy some turmoil.

"Okay."

Tommy was still trembling in Wilbur's arms, his face fully buried in his shirt when the doors to the throne room opened again.

Tommy held his breath and looked up, terrified of what he might see.

But... *he* wasn't there.

Instead, Technoblade and Philza entered the hallway. Philza was still smiling.

Philza was alive.

He wasn't dead.

Alive, alive, *alive*.

And before Tommy quite realized what he was doing, he was pulling himself out of Wilbur's arms and straight into Philza's, because he was *alive*, and that was something that even Sam couldn't manage, and the way he had smiled at him when Tommy touched the plant—

Philza caught Tommy in his arms, and Tommy held his breath, wondering if he had made a stupid decision, wondering if Philza was going to kill him now, wondering what on earth had been running through his mind.

But the embrace didn't hurt.

It felt like Wilbur.

It felt like Sam.

And Tommy suddenly remembered the words that Wilbur had whispered into his hair.

"Thank you for being alive," Tommy whispered into Philza's shirt.

Because Philza... Philza acted like Sam sometimes. He looked at Tommy the way Sam would. He was hugging Tommy the way Sam might.

But this was Philza. This wasn't Sam.

Tommy pulled himself out of the hug, and Philza didn't try to stop him.

"Thank *you*," Philza said, sounding like he meant it, "Thank you for being a marvelous, brave boy, and thank you for not dying again."

Tommy felt dizzy. The world rocked underneath him, and Wilbur grabbed his shoulders to steady him.

"I'm sorry." Tommy wasn't sure why he kept apologizing when everyone seemed so unhappy when he did so. "I should've done it sooner, I shouldn't have disobeyed you, I should've—"

"Tommy," Philza said, cutting Tommy short, "I'll admit that you shouldn't have chased Dream—"

Tommy's heart sunk.

“—but I’m *so* proud of you.”

Tommy choked. “What?”

“You stood up to him,” Philza said, smiling, “And you let me protect you. You didn’t force the burden on yourself.”

Tommy blinked. He didn’t understand. He had disobeyed Philza. He had worried him, or made him angry, but he was still proud of Tommy?

How did that make any sense at all?

“I don’t understand. I’m sorry.”

“That’s okay,” Wilbur said, “You will one day.”

Ranboo watched the scene quietly.

He knew he should be happy for Tommy and Tubbo. He knew he should be glad that Tommy had his family, that Tubbo’s dad was there for him no matter what.

But the only thing he could feel was a terrible emptiness.

Ranboo stepped away from the reuniting families, hugging himself. He didn’t belong to this scene. He didn’t belong to these people.

He was just someone that they had gone to for refuge. He was just a stranger they decided to show kindness to.

Ranboo shut his eyes, trying to imagine what things might be like if Karl were here. He would... dash up to Ranboo, demanding to know why he had been so reckless.

He would hug Ranboo, pulling Ranboo in close but not as close that Ranboo couldn’t breathe.

He would tell Ranboo how relieved he was that Ranboo was safe, that Ranboo shouldn’t endanger himself like that, how he loved Ranboo.

Ranboo squeezed her eyes shut tighter, trying not to feel the way his eyes were trying so hard to release water.

“Are you alright, kid?” A voice asked.

Ranboo snapped his eyes open, and he shot his head up to see Technoblade looking down at him with concern.

“What?” Ranboo asked.

“Are you doing alright?” Technoblade repeated. His wings puffed up slightly. “You don’t look very happy.”

Ranboo laughed shakily. “I’m fine,” he said, “I don’t know what you’re talking—”

Technoblade sighed, interrupting Ranboo. “Do you want a hug or something?”

Ranboo stared at Technoblade in shock, and Technoblade’s face tinged pink.

“It would be understandable if you did.” Technoblade looked away. “Everyone else is hugging each other, and seeing you stand off of the side looks kind of depressing, but if you’re touch averse or something—”

“I would,” Ranboo suddenly blurted out, “Like a hug, I mean.”

Technoblade froze. “Oh, um, in that case.”

Technoblade slowly wrapped his arms around Ranboo, and Ranboo slowly hugged Technoblade back.

It didn’t feel like Karl’s hugs. Karl’s hugs were tighter. They smelled of fresh dirt from the garden and a cake that he was making in the oven.

Technoblade’s hug was looser, smelling of sweat and smoke.

But it still felt *amazing*.

Ranboo relaxed further into the hug, sniffing slightly. It was a little embarrassing, but Technoblade didn’t seem to mind.

“Thanks,” Ranboo whispered.

“No problem, kid,” Technoblade sighed.

It wasn’t hard for Purpled to find Punz. In the courtyard.

When Punz saw him, he gave Purpled an exhausted look. “Seriously? Again?”

“Seriously? Again?” Purpled mocked, “What did you think I was going to do? Let you go?”

“Maybe you can give up your plot?” Punz suggested, crushing a white feather in his hand.

“You keep cheating,” Purpled groaned.

“You literally made almost the entire castle get a migraine today.”

“Well, I guess it’s your fault for not figuring out that I was snapping my fingers at everyone, huh?”

Punz sighed, massaging his eyes. “Why are you here?”

Purpled glared. “I would’ve thought that was pretty obvious. You know, with earlier, and the stabbing.”

Punz glared at Purpled. “Let me clarify. Why are you trying to kill me?”

Purpled laughed. “Seriously? Oh, I don’t know, maybe you joined one of the most evil people in existence and wanted me to join him to at the age of *seven*.”

“Dream isn’t the most evil person in existence.”

“Oh?” Purpled grinned grimly. “Tell me, what does Dream do to you when you fail?”

Punz looked away.

Purpled sighed, glancing around at the flowers that seemed untouched by Dream’s corruption.

“Listen,” he said, “You were a terrible brother, even from the start. Stabbing anyone who bothered you wasn’t exactly a good ‘role model’ behavior.”

“I don’t see you trying to kill me,” Punz said, glancing at the knife at Purpled’s belt.

“Let me finish,” Purpled said, “Punz, even if Dream is as great as you say, he literally runs some sort of military operation. You wanted me to join a military operation at the age of seven.”

Punz flinched.

Purpled pulled the knife out of his belt. “And then you help Dream take over the kingdom for whatever sick plans he has in store,” he finished, “I have every right to do what I have been wanting for *years* and killing you for what you nearly did to me.”

Punz snorted. “You can’t kill me, Purpled. In case you haven’t noticed.” He gestured to his wings.

“I’m patient,” Purpled said simply, “But guess what?” Purpled put his knife back into his belt. “You’re not worth it. I’m not dirtying my hands on you.”

Punz just stood there mutely. It was kind of pathetic.

Purpled almost wanted to laugh at how desperate he wanted to kill him nodded, like he was some sort of unstoppable monster.

“I’m going to have to kill you, you know,” Punz said quietly, pulling out his sword.

Purpled grinned. “You can try,” he said, “But, you know, having King Philza on my side might help.”

Purpled pulled out one of Philza's gray feathers and crushed it into his own hand.

Punz's face went a shade of gray. “

“Goodbye, Punz,” Purpled said cheerfully, “Maybe if you're lucky, you'll go to prison for your crimes.”

They went back to Ranboo's house.

Apparently, King Philza wanted time to get rid of as many traitors as possible without Tommy or the others getting hurt.

Technoblade stayed behind at the palace, but Wilbur went with Tommy, Tubbo, Ranboo, and Schlatt.

“Techno's a bit protective,” Wilbur explained to Tommy when he asked, “He probably just wants to make sure that Phil doesn't get killed.”

Tommy knew it was a stupid concern, that he shouldn't worry. Philza was powerful. Philza... Philza had killed *him*.

Back at the palace, Phil had tentatively asked if Tommy wanted to see *his* body.

Tommy had hesitated for a moment before grabbing tightly onto Wilbur's wrist. “I—“ He had seen plenty of dead bodies in his life before.

What was one more?

And besides, Tommy wasn't sure he'd believe that *he* was dead before he saw it for himself.

“Okay,” Tommy whispered.

Philza had looked over at Wilbur. “Wil?”

“I do,” Wilbur said, sounding firmer than Tommy, “I want to make sure that he can't hurt my brother ever again.”

Oh.

Tommy had forgotten about that.

It felt like ages ago when Wilbur told him that they were brothers. That Philza was his father.

Tommy found he was less terrified by it than before.

But brothers?

Tommy held tighter to Wilbur's wrist.

Wilbur made Tommy feel safe. But was that enough?

Wilbur led Tommy to the throne room, and they stopped in front of the gilded doors.

“If you want to leave,” Wilbur said, “We can leave. Do not be afraid to tell me. I will not be angry.”

“Okay.”

“Do you think you can repeat what I just said to you?”

Tommy swallowed. “If I want to leave.. we can. And... you...” The last part was almost hard to believe. “You won’t be angry.”

“That’s right.” Wilbur smiled.

Tommy’s confusion only twisted around his chest, and he almost felt like he wanted to cry.

“Okay,” Wilbur muttered. He pressed his hand against the door. “Let’s do this.”

And Wilbur slowly opened the door so that it was silent. They stepped into the throne room.

Tommy’s eyes instantly landed on him.

He was lying on the ground, his hands sprawled out in what looked like an uncomfortable position. He wasn’t moving.

They walked closer, and nausea churned in Tommy’s stomach.

Now they were standing directly over him. His mask was staring straight up at them.

“He... he looks small,” Wilbur said. He let out a laugh. “He... he really was just human.”

The thought was nearly incomprehensible.

Tommy had seen people who were lying like his father’s killer was, but they were still alive.

Besides, once his father had fallen dead.

He had gotten back up again.

Tommy bent down, not letting go of Wilbur’s hand. With trembling fingers and sweating palms, he slowly grabbed the hard porcelain of his mask.

Tommy carefully took it off of his face.

A face that belonged to someone slightly older than Sam stared up at him. His green eyes were unseeing. His skin was deathly pale.

Tommy waited for the light to return to his eyes. Tommy waited for him to sit up and kill Wilbur before taking Tommy away again.



But he never moved.

Wilbur was right.

He really was just human.

He was just like everyone else Thomas had killed.

Tommy's breath hitched. Was this his fault? He... he hadn't delivered the blow, but...had he caused his death? Was this another person Tommy was responsible for, another person he'd have haunting his dreams?

"Tommy?" Wilbur whispered.

Tommy shut his eyes, but the image of Dream towering over him was the only thing he could see.

Tommy opened his eyes with a gasp.

"I want to go," he whispered.

Wilbur quickly led Tommy out of the room.

He didn't look mad.

Tommy could hardly believe it. Why didn't Wilbur ever get angry?

Tommy never received an answer to that question, and before Tommy knew it, they had arrived back at Ranboo's house.

The house was basically untouched. The people who had teleported there in Ranboo, Tommy, and Tubbo's place must've already left, because nobody was there. The garden was silent, the house was empty.

Tommy spotted Henry sitting on the sofa, and he looked up at Wilbur hesitantly.

Wilbur gave Tommy a nod.

Tommy quickly let go of Wilbur and dashed across the room, grabbing Henry. His fur was just as soft as Tommy remembered, and Tommy hugged him tightly.

Some of the knots in Tommy's chest loosened as he pressed Henry's soft body against his chest.

Ranboo instantly grabbed Enderchest, who happened to be sitting next to Henry, and Tubbo grabbed Bee.

They all sat next to each other, leaning into each other's warmth on the sofa.

It felt... nice.

Tommy's eyes felt like they were about to slip shut, but he tried to resist. Nobody would like it if he fell asleep on them. Nobody would like that at all—

“You can fall asleep,” Schlatt said, ruffling Tommy's hair and smiling like he had never done anything wrong in his life, “You've had a long day.”

Tommy didn't have the energy to say anything.

But he had received permission to sleep.

So he let his eyes slip shut.

They stayed at the house for about a week.

Ranboo wasn't sure what to think of it.

Technoblade visited sometimes, and Schlatt made some really good meals, and Tubbo and Tommy were more than happy to spend time with Ranboo all day.

But Ranboo had almost wished they would leave sooner.

The longer they stay, the longer they act like that this home was their home, that they were some sort of family, the more Ranboo's chest hurt.

Ranboo didn't want to go back to the way things were before. Ranboo didn't want to wake up and find that Tubbo and Tommy weren't sharing his nest. Ranboo didn't want to wake up and discover that his house was silent, that nobody else was there, that Ranboo was alone again.

But the week came to a close, and Ranboo was forced to face the horrible reality.

They were leaving.

They were leaving Ranboo behind.

Everybody was gathering their things. Tommy and Tubbo were both holding their respective stuffed animals. Wilbur and Technoblade were gathering a few things that they had apparently brought with them, and Schlatt was waiting for everyone else to be done.

Technoblade was the first to come down the stairs, which made sense, considering that he had spent less time with them.

He reached the bottom of the stairs and walked over to Ranboo.

“Are you coming with us?” he asked.

Coming with them? What was Technoblade talking about.

“What?”

Technoblade groaned, and he craned his head back up toward the stairs. “Wilbur!” he shouted, “You were supposed to tell him!”

“What?!” Wilbur’s distant voice shouted back.

Technoblade rolled his eyes. “Forget it!”

He sighed, massaging his eyes. “My idiot brother was supposed to tell you that you can either stay here or live in the castle with us. If you stay here, we’ll definitely visit you from time to time.”

Ranboo felt like he was almost floating for joy. “I... I can go with you?” he asked.

Technoblade nodded. “If you so desire.”

And, despite how much he’d been dreading everyone’s departure, Ranboo hesitated.

He had lived in this house his entire life. Karl had built this house himself. This was the house that Karl had taught him his lessons in, and fed him, and tucked him in his nest at night.

Would it be betrayal to move on?

“You don’t have to go, of course,” Technoblade said, “But we figured we should give you the option. Tommy likes you, and Schlatt and Tubbo have agreed that they wouldn’t mind staying in the palace with us, it isn’t like there isn’t an abundance of guest rooms...”

Technoblade continued rambling about the sorts of things Ranboo could do at the palace, and Ranboo continued to think.

Karl... Karl wouldn’t want him to be lonely, right? Karl would want him to be happy?

That felt like a stupid question. Karl did everything to make sure Ranboo was happy.

He probably wouldn’t mind Ranboo moving out.

“Can I pack?” Ranboo asked, because even if he was leaving the house, he didn’t want to leave everything behind.

Technoblade stopped mid-ramble. “Is that a yes?”

Ranboo cleared his throat. “Um, yes. But could I pack first?”

Technoblade chuckled. “Of course you can, you think we’re going to force you to leave all of your stuff behind?”

Ranboo’s face went warm. In hindsight, it did feel sort of like a dumb question.

But Techno’s face wasn’t mocking, and Ranboo literally flew up the stairs to get all of his stuff into a bag. He didn’t want to take everything. Instead, he chose some drawings that Karl

had made. He stuffed his toys in his bag. He took his favorite blankets in his nest. He grabbed one of Karl's shirts.

Wilbur was kind enough to help him drag his very over-filled bag down the stairs, although he instantly shoved it into Technoblade's arms.

"This is yours now." Wilbur added his own bag to Technoblade's weight.

Technoblade stared at Wilbur blankly. "I hate you."

Tommy and Tubbo were already waiting outside with Schlatt, and Ranboo burst through the doors, thrumming with excitement.

"I'm coming with you!" he cheered.

"Really?" Tubbo asked brightly, "Awesome!"

Tommy gave Ranboo a small smile. "I'm glad." His voice was soft, but a barely perceivable confidence underlined the words.

Ranboo's chest was warm.

Karl would want this. He would want Ranboo to live with his friends.

So, as Wilbur and Technoblade marched out of Ranboo's house, bickering with one another about the luggage they had to carry, Ranboo turned around toward his house.

He thought about Karl standing at the door, asking Ranboo to go back inside. He thought about the lonely days and nights after Karl had died.

"Goodbye," he whispered.

Ranboo closed his eyes, and the wind rustling the leaves almost felt like it was saying goodbye back.

When they arrived at the capital, things were... weird.

The last time Tommy had been here, he had been driven by the all consuming goal to kill his father's killer.

But Tommy didn't have to worry about that this time.

This time, Tommy was with Wilbur and Technoblade and Schlatt. He was walking instead of running. Tubbo and Ranboo were holding his hands, but Wilbur and Technoblade were standing behind him, as though they would protect him from anything.

The capital was *big*.

The tall buildings overhead made Tommy feel almost dizzy. There were people *everywhere*. A lot of them were flying, but some were walking on the path.

Everyone was staring at them.

Tommy wasn't sure why they were staring. At first, he thought it might've been because of his wings. Those had earned some uncomfortable stares before he had gotten Purpled's cloak, and even after when he had accidentally been caught with it off.

But he then realized that some people weren't staring at him, or even Ranboo.

As a matter of fact, a lot of people bowed in Technoblade and Wilbur's direction.

Right. They were royalty. King Philza was their dad.

Tommy knew that, but to see so many people stop to bow was... strange.

To see so many people in general was weird, if Tommy was being completely honest. He could hardly believe there were this many people in the world, much less than in this one city.

There were so many sounds, and there was so much to look at, and he could smell a weird mixture of bread and spices and something gross—

“Are you alright?” Tubbo asked.

Tommy subconsciously leaned closer to Tubbo, but he didn't seem to mind. He chewed on the inside of his cheek, trying to decide if he wanted to burden anyone with his issues.

“I'm fine,” he lied.

“It's probably a lot,” Wilbur said. Tommy could hear his wing arc out, and a comfortable shadow fell over him, as though he were being protected. “Technoblade can fly you to the palace if you'd like. It's quieter there.”

Tommy didn't want to leave Ranboo and Tubbo, but everything was so *much*. How did people live in cities like these?

“Are you alright, Ranboo?” Technoblade asked.

Ranboo hummed. “It's big,” he agreed, “But I'm okay.”

“Just checking. And I don't have any problem with carrying you, Tommy.”

Guilt squeezed at Tommy's chest. “But won't I be heavy?”

Technoblade shook his head. “You'll be fine. I promise.”

Someone started shouting about something in the distance, and Tommy flinched away, feeling his wings shudder.

“Okay,” he blurted out, “Okay, I'd like to be inside. Please. I'm sorry.”

“Thank you for telling us,” Wilbur said, “We will never be angry if you’re uncomfortable.”

“What he said,” Technoblade said gruffly.

Tommy glanced at Tubbo and Ranboo.

Tubbo smiled. “Yeah, it’s fine. We’ll see you later.”

Ranboo nodded.

Tommy slowly let go of Tubbo’s and Ranboo’s hands, wiping the sweat from his palms and onto his pants. Then, he walked up to Technoblade.

“Okay,” Technoblade said, turning around and crouching, “Climb up on my back.”

Tommy awkwardly wrapped his arms around Technoblade’s neck and wrapped his legs around Technoblade’s torso. He waited for Technoblade to complain about his weight, or how tightly he was holding him.

Tubbo, who had been holding onto Henry and Bee, handed Technoblade Henry.

Instead, Technoblade gave Tommy a nod. “Alright, let’s go.”

And then Technoblade jumped into the air, flapping his wings behind him.

Tommy had flown before. His father—his father’s killer had taught him. Tommy had gotten to know the feeling of the wind in his hair as he flew higher and higher into the freedom.

But then his father’s killer had started clipping his feathers, just like Sam’s feathers were.

A small part of Tommy was astonished to realize that most everyone had their feathers whole and unbroken. A small part of Tommy burned when he realized that he hadn’t practiced enough to be able to fly once his feathers had grown back.

Being carried by Technoblade was slightly different compared to flying on his own. Technoblade’s wings beat slightly uncomfortably against Tommy’s body. The wind was less freeing, and Tommy had to hold on lest he fall to his death.

But it was still nice. It was still nice to have the wind in his hair to be free from the ground, at least for a little bit.

Technoblade weaved around other people flying, somehow not crashing into them despite how many people were in their way.

And before Tommy knew it, Technoblade had landed on the balcony of the palace, returning Henry to him. A guard was standing there, and Tommy instantly ducked away behind Technoblade.

“Don’t worry,” Technoblade said, “This is one of ours. *Right*, Jack?”

Jack snorted. "I hate that Dream guy," he said, "He worked us to the bone. Threw me in prison when I protested about it."

Technoblade sighed. "Your protest was punching him in the face and calling him many expletives."

"Exactly," Jack said, "It should've worked but *no*, instead I get prison!"

Tommy winced at the sound, still half-way behind Technoblade.

"Keep your shouting volume down," Technoblade said sternly.

Jack glanced at Tommy, and guilt showed on his face. "Right. Sorry little guy."

"I'm not little," Tommy said automatically, "I'm... I'm a big man."

Jack laughed. "Alright. Sorry, big man." His eyes flicked toward Tommy's wings, but he didn't say anything.

Technoblade wrapped his arm around Tommy's shoulders protectively, and Tommy found he didn't mind. Instead, he let himself get led from the balcony and inside the palace.

The palace was also *huge*.

Tommy had already been in it before, but like the capital, he hadn't let himself get distracted by the tall walls, the shining floors, the large tapestries on the walls.

It was amazing.

It was so much larger than Tubbo and Ranboo's houses combined.

"You live here?" Tommy whispered.

Technoblade laughed softly. "You live here too, you know."

"Oh." Tommy had almost forgotten about that part. "Right."

Technoblade cleared his throat. "Dad's probably in his office or the throne room," he said, "So we can either go find him, or I can lead you straight to your bedroom."

Tommy swallowed.

He knew Philza wasn't bad. He knew Philza would protect him. He had already done it once before. There was no reason to believe he wouldn't do it again.

But for some reason, whenever Tommy entertained the thought of going to him, it was as though his stomach was trying to weave around all of the people in the city.

"I—"

Would Philza be mad if Tommy said no? Would Technoblade be mad? They had said that it was good if Tommy talked to them about how he felt, but did that mean they would be mad if he didn't?

The rules were all different, and it was weird, and Tommy didn't know what to do, and—

“You can say no,” Technoblade said, only confirming what Tommy had thought earlier, “I won't get mad.”

Tommy swallowed. “Will Philza get mad?” His voice cracked.

Something flashed in Technoblade's face, and for a terrifying moment, he thought that Technoblade had gotten angry at him for the question.

But for some reason, Technoblade didn't get angry. Instead, he said, “No. He won't be mad.”

Tommy took a deep breath. He could do this. They weren't going to be mad. They said they weren't going to be mad.

“Can we go to my bedroom?”

Technoblade smiled and ruffled Tommy's hair. “Okay.”

This was confusing. Tommy hugged Henry closer to himself.

Tommy followed Technoblade down the halls, and they stopped in front of a door that was much less large or fancy compared to the one that led to the throne room.

“Here we are.” For some reason, Technoblade's face was red as he reached for the door handle. “We tried to think of things you would like, but we weren't sure...” He sighed. “I'll just let you judge for yourself.”

Technoblade opened the door and allowed Tommy to step inside.

The room was *large*. Unlike the room Tommy lived in for the first eleven years of his life, Tommy could probably run around in this room and get tired. Tommy had more than enough room to lie down and roll around.

And the room wasn't just wide, it was also *tall*. There was a weird piece of furniture, almost like a sofa hanging from the ceiling, and Tommy realized that it was probably meant to be flown to.

Tommy hoped that he'd be able to fly again someday.

The size of the room wasn't the only crazy thing about it.

There was a soft red carpet on the floor, and Tommy crouched down and ran his fingers up and down the strange material. The carpet went a darker and lighter color depending on which direction Tommy ran his fingers, and he did it repeatedly.



Then he remembered that Technoblade was still in a room, and he jumped to his feet.

“Sorry—”

“You’re fine.” Technoblade was smiling for some reason.

Tommy was too entranced by the room to worry about it.

In one corner, there was a shelf full of books. Some of the books were really small, but some of them were huge.

In another corner, there was a huge cabinet, presumably for clothing. A mirror that had to be bigger than Tommy sat on the wall next to it.

A huge pile of blankets and stuffed animals sat in the center of the room. It had to be piled up to Tommy’s waist, it was so huge.

Tommy gaped.

“That’s for your nest,” Technoblade said, pointing to the blankets and stuffed animals. He cleared his throat. “I, um, I made those stuffed animals.”

Tommy spun around toward Technoblade. He *made* the stuffed animals? How?

“It’s called sewing,” Technoblade explained. Had he seen the astonishment on Tommy’s face? “If you want, I can show you.”

Tommy didn’t know if he wanted that. He didn’t even know what sewing was, except that it created stuffed animals.

But he did know that this was one of the best gifts he had ever received.

“Thank you,” he whispered reverently. He anxiously looked back at the room. “I don’t deserve this.”

Technoblade’s face looked soft. “If I had it my way, Tommy, you would have the world.”

Tommy didn’t know what to say, everything was so big and so safe and so wonderful and it was so strange and he *missed Sam*—

Tommy burst into tears.

“Oh, oh no.” Technoblade sounded genuinely distressed. “Was it something I said? I, I’m not good at this.”

Tommy brought his hands to his eyes in an attempt to stem the tears. He was making Technoblade upset. He was making Technoblade upset like a *failure*.

“Sorry,” he whimpered, “I’m sorry, I’m being ungrateful—”

“No, you’re not,” Technoblade said quickly, “Sorry if I made it seem that way, uh, do you want a hug?”

Technoblade hesitantly opened up his arms, and Tommy hesitated before slowly walking into the hug. Technoblade’s hug was firm, and Tommy sunk into it.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered again.

“Don’t be.” Technoblade rested his chin on top of Tommy’s head. “You didn’t do anything wrong.”

Tommy wasn’t sure he agreed, but he didn’t argue.

Eventually, Technoblade and Tommy separated, and they met up with the others, who had finally reached the palace.

“Wow,” Tubbo said in awe. He turned to Schlatt. “We’re going to live here?”

Schlatt laughed. “Apparently, buddy.”

Ranboo himself looked entranced, and Tommy felt deep understanding when he kept looking up at the ceilings.

“It’s so big,” Ranboo whispered.

“I showed him the bedroom,” Technoblade said.

Wilbur’s face became one of betrayal. “Seriously? I thought we were going to do that together.”

“What was I supposed to do, stand around?”

Wilbur’s feathers ruffled. “You could’ve showed him around, I—” His voice quieted. “—I wanted to see his reaction.”

Technoblade frowned. “...you’re right, Wilbur,” he finally said, “I should’ve waited. Sorry.”

Wilbur pursed his mouth together. “It’s fine,” he said. It didn’t sound fine.

“Sorry,” Tommy said for the thousandth time that day.

“Don’t be,” Wilbur said softly. He looked less upset now. “Did you like it?”

Tommy nodded quickly. “It was really nice. Thank you so much.”

“It was nothing.”

They got used to their bedrooms, and then it was time for dinner.

Tommy could hardly believe what he was seeing.

The dinner table was, once again, *huge*.

And there was *so much food*.

Philza sat at the head of the table while everyone else sat down the sides, and Tommy stared at the multiple different forks with a feeling of dread.

Wilbur was more than happy to point to which forks they were supposed to use, and Philza never once told him that he was being sloppy.

It still made Tommy nervous.

After dinner, Tommy was led to his bedroom, where apparently there were clothes *for* sleeping. Tommy could barely comprehend it, but that was becoming something he was getting used to.

Tommy slipped on the silky night clothes, astonished at how soft something someone *wore* were. Was this allowed? Surely this wasn't clothing.

But Wilbur had said these were his night clothes, and he couldn't correct him, could he?

Tommy decided he wouldn't go seek him out, and instead he went to his large assortment of blankets and stuffed animals.

Tommy carefully placed the stuffed animals on the floor next to the blankets, taking care not to place them on their heads or anything like that. Then, he arranged the blankets into the most comfortable nest he could muster.

Once he was done with the nest, Tommy placed the stuffed animals inside, and he crawled into his nest, lying down in the softness.

It felt really good. It felt safe.

Still, it took a strange amount of time for Tommy to fall asleep.

Tommy woke up, and he was alone.

He was breathing heavily, but only the corners of a nightmare came into his memory. It must've been bad.

Tommy took deep breaths. He was in his nest. He was surrounded by the stuffed animals that Technoblade had made him. Henry was in his arms.

Sam was nowhere to be seen.

But Sam was dead. He wasn't going to be there for Tommy anymore.

Nobody was anywhere to be seen.

But Tommy had his own room anymore. He no longer needed to share with someone. He didn't have to burden anyone.

The room was dark.

Tommy's old room had been dark.

Tommy rolled over and tried to ignore the way his heart pounded rapidly. He was fine. It was fine. He wasn't going to be a burden.

He ducked his head under a blanket and tried to fall back asleep.

Tommy kept waking up at random times in the middle of the night, but that was fine. As long as he wasn't being a burden, it was fine.

The next morning, Tommy felt like he could fall asleep on his breakfast plate.

Fortunately, breakfast was much less fancy than dinner. Tommy came into the dining room to find a servant waiting for him, bowing and asking if he would like anything to eat.

Tommy blinked blearily, trying to think past the sleepiness that was weighing down on him like a heavy blanket.

"Yes please," he finally said.

The servant asked him what he would like. "Um." Tommy frowned. "Eggs?"

The servant bowed and left the room at a strangely quick pace.

Tommy was too tired to worry about it, and so he just sat down at the table, wondering if he was doing something wrong by being there before everyone else was.

Apparently not, though, because Technoblade came in a few moments later, looking almost as sleepy as Tommy, although his hair was tied up in a braid.

"Good morning," he said, "How did you sleep?"

"Good," Tommy lied.

Technoblade looked doubtful, but he didn't press. Instead, they ate their breakfast together in silence.

When they were done, Technoblade cleared his throat. "Wilbur and I... would like to know if you'd like a tour of the palace."

Tommy quickly nodded. This palace was so large he almost got lost on his way to breakfast.

Sometimes, the idea of three meals a day made Tommy feel weird inside.

“That would be nice,” he said, “The palace is big.”

Technoblade smiled. “Yeah, it is.”

They found Wilbur, who looked thrilled at the idea of being able to explore the palace with Tommy.

“Just wait until you see the library!” Wilbur was rambling excitedly as they walked down the hall, “You’ll love it Tommy, it’s so big—”

“What’s a library?”

Wilbur’s smile faded, and Tommy’s heart skipped a beat.

“It’s a room full of books,” Technoblade explained, gesturing tiredly. He hesitated. “Can you read?”

Tommy’s face felt warm. “I can read,” he said shortly, “I’m not... I’m not stupid.” His shoulders crept up to his ears. “Sorry.”

“Nobody would call you stupid,” Wilbur said patiently, “We just weren’t sure. If you didn’t know, we would’ve been more than happy to teach you.”

Tommy felt truly stupid now. “Oh,” he said, “Okay. Sorry.”

“It’s fine,” Technoblade said.

They did show him the library, and they were right. It was filled to the brim with books of all shapes and sizes, and it put his bookshelf in his room to shame.

There were even spots to read up in the ceiling.

Wilbur stared at those wistfully.

They continued their tour, and a painting on the wall caught Tommy’s eye. He stopped suddenly, causing Technoblade and Wilbur to come to an abrupt halt.

“What is it?” Wilbur asked.

Tommy didn’t say anything, just continuing to stare at the painting.

There was a teenager with green hair and bright eyes in the gilded frame. Freckles dotted his face, and there was a rosy complexion that Tommy hadn’t ever seen on him.

But the face was undeniable.

“Sam?” Tommy whispered, staring at the painting.

“Oh,” Wilbur whispered back.

It looked so real. And Sam... he looked so *happy*. He looked nothing like Tommy's Sam. Tommy's Sam had gray in his hair and scars on his face, and he was so pale, and Tommy had never seen freckles on him.

Had Tommy made Sam so miserable?

But then Tommy remembered the way Sam held him, even after death and in the dream, and Tommy decided that it couldn't have been him. It was Dre—it was his father's killer. Right?

"I didn't realize your Sam was also Puffy's Sam," Wilbur said quietly.

"Puffy..." Tommy recognized the name. Tubbo had said it earlier, and Sam... Sam talked about her once or twice, Tommy was pretty sure.

*"She would get so passionate sometimes," Sam would tell him, "But she was the best friend anyone could ever ask for."*

"They have a grave for him," Technoblade said quietly.

Tommy didn't look away from Sam when he spoke. "What?"

"They all thought... they all thought he died twenty years ago," Wilbur shakily explained, "So they gave him a grave."

Tommy's chest hurt. "Do I have a grave?"

Silence rang in the hallway.

"Yes," Wilbur whispered.

"Oh." Tommy hesitated. "Can I... can I see Sam's grave?"

He braced himself for rejection.

"Of course," Wilbur said instantly.

Wilbur and Technoblade led Tommy outside of the palace to a large yard outside of the palace.

The sun was shining brightly, and the grass was bright green as they walked toward a field full of large gravestones.

They reached a more ornate looking stone, and Tommy held his breath when he laid eyes on the description.

*Sam*

*Loving son and friend*

*751 A.R. – 766 A.R.*

Tommy stared at the stone blankly. It felt wrong.

It felt like it belonged to a random stranger than Sam.

“The grave’s wrong,” Tommy said quietly.

It was more than just the inscription.

“You’re right,” Technoblade said, “I’ll talk to Phil about having another funeral.”

Tommy stared up at Technoblade in shock. “Really? You’ll—you’ll do that?”

“If he’s as great as you say, he deserves it,” Technoblade said simply, staring at the stone solemnly.

Phil had finally discovered the location of Dream’s base.

Technoblade and Wilbur both insisted that they would come, because of course they did.

Phil knew better than to stop them.

This time, however, he knew Tommy wouldn’t try to follow them.

“I won’t try to follow you,” Tommy said quietly, “I don’t... I don’t want to go back there.”

Schlatt promised he’d take good care of the kids, and Phil believed him.

So that’s how Phil found himself there, staring at the mountain that Dream had made his base.

He had an army with him, Wilbur and Technoblade standing by his side. If there were any remaining followers, they’d deal with them quickly and easily.

Phil nodded his head, and they stormed the base.

As Phil expected, Dream still had followers in his mountainside base. They overcame and captured them, and soon they were left to simply search the empty rooms.

Phil instantly went to the lower levels.

All of them shivered as the lighting in the base got dimmer and dimmer, and eventually, the dark halls were only sparsely lit with torches.

It looked like a dungeon where people were left to die.

Phil searched the rooms one by one. Most of them were empty.

One of them, however...

It was a small room. There as a single blanket on the floor. Chains were on the side of the wall. Blood stained the floors.

Crushed remains of black feathers were in between the stone.

A familiar rage surged through Phil, but there was nothing to be done about it now. Dream was dead. Phil had made sure of it. There was nothing left to do but grieve for the childhood that was so brutally ripped away from his son.

“Did Tommy...” Wilbur’s voice trembled.

“I think so,” Phil whispered back. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to scream, or curse, or cry, or puke.

Technoblade muttered curses under his breath. Wilbur was already crying.

Phil turned away from the room, pushing back that familiar rage.

“It’s in the past,” Phil whispered, “We can only be here for Tommy. Now.”

Wilbur still buried his face into Phil’s shoulder. “I should’ve been there, I should’ve—”

“You were a child,” Phil said sternly, “This is nobody’s fault but Dream’s.”

They left the room and went down the hall. If there was anything left of what happened to Tommy, or anyone else who needed rescuing, they needed to know.

There was a large hole carved into the mountain, and the three of them stopped to stare at it for a moment.

“What happened?” Wilbur whispered.

“Tommy probably knows,” Technoblade said heavily in reply.

They finally came across a seemingly empty room. However, a table sat in the center, full of vials and bowls. Strange ingredients filled jars, and a pile of feathers sat on top of the table.

From the char marks on the stone, it also looked like the room had faced many, *many* explosions.

“In here.”

Wilbur and Technoblade followed Phil into the room, and Technoblade picked up a sheet of paper.

“This... this is a recipe for potions.”

Wilbur stiffened. “What?”

Technoblade handed the page to Wilbur, who handed the page to Philza.



It was very detailed. It went through the steps on how to place very specific liquids in a vial, and then apparently one placed the feather in the liquid before charging it with a very precise amount of electricity while under an incredibly precise amount of heat from a fire.

“Dream invented potions?” Wilbur whispered, looking shaken.

“I don’t think so,” Phil said slowly, “If he could invent potions, he would’ve done it sooner. It must’ve been recent.”

Sam had an electricity power.

“Maybe there’s clues in the room?” Technoblade offered.

Despite being obviously shaken, Wilbur looked curious, and so the three of them began searching the room for clues.

Technoblade was the one to spot them.

“I think there’s something in between these stones,” he said slowly.

“Really?” Wilbur frowned. “I already looked there.”

“No, I can definitely see something.”

It took an extraordinary amount of time to be able to pry one of the stones out of the wall, and sure enough, a clump of papers was hidden inside.

Phil’s chest felt suddenly heavy, and something told him that they had just discovered something incredibly important.

With trembling fingers, Phil picked up the sheets of paper, beginning to read them.

His heart froze as he got further into reading, his breathing shuddered. These papers were deeply personal, but he found he couldn’t stop reading.

When he finished, he collapsed to his knees. And after all this time of keeping himself under control, he burst into sobs.

He cried for his son. He cried for himself and the years he had missed. He cried for the boy that had promised him he wouldn’t be a hero.

And a hero he was.

But Phil had only ever wanted him to be a boy.

Tommy felt overwhelming relief when Philza, Technoblade, and Wilbur all came back alive.

But it became clear that something was wrong as soon as a knock sounded on his bedroom door. When Tommy opened it, he found Philza facing him with a heavy frown.

“Tommy,” he said softly, “I have something you need to see.”

Tommy couldn't breathe. “Did I do something wrong?”

He probably had. He probably screwed up somewhere along the line, and now—

“No, baby,” Philza whispered, smiling weakly, “You didn't do anything. I just... have something for you.”

He handed Tommy a pile of folded papers. Tommy stared at them, rubbing his fingers up and down the rough texture.

They smelled like Tommy's old home.

“They're from Sam,” Philza whispered, “Do you... do you want me to leave?”

Tommy sucked in a breath. From Sam? These papers were from Sam?

Tommy didn't realize that Sam had left him anything.

Tommy hesitated. “Have... have you read them?”

Phil looked guilty. “I'm sorry,” he said, “I didn't realize what they were at first, and then I was selfish. Wilbur and Technoblade haven't read them.”

That was nice. It was nice to know that whatever was written in these pages would stay between Tommy, Sam, and Phil.

“Okay,” Tommy said, “Um, can you wait outside my door?”

It felt too demanding, to tell Philza to leave but stay at the same time.

But Philza smiled, because nobody in this stupid palace knew how to get angry.

“Okay, mate,” he said softly, “Call me if you need me.”

And then Philza left Tommy's bedroom, shutting the door carefully behind him.

Tommy stared at the spot Philza had once been in, wondering what he had done to deserve such kindness. Such patience. He was a monster, and...

Was Tommy a monster?

Tommy thought about Ranboo and his kind smiles, and he found he wasn't so sure about that anymore.

Tommy looked down at the papers in his hand.

Philza said they were from Sam.

Should he really read them?

If they were his last thing from Sam... maybe Tommy should save them. Maybe Tommy should hide them away.

But a small part of Tommy's chest burned with an all-consuming need to know what was inside the pages

Besides, Phil was probably still waiting outside the door, and Tommy didn't want to make him upset.

So, ever so carefully, Tommy unfolded the papers.

The papers were old, he could tell that much. The corners of them were burnt and slightly ripped up, and the color of the pages were uneven.

But Tommy was more worried about the contents than the age.

At first, the page looked like a weird recipe for some sort of food? But there was something else written in the margins, and Tommy sucked in a breath.

*Dream gave me a child. His name is Thomas and his eyes are bluer than the sky.*

*Dream told me not to get attached. That Thomas was his son.*

*I won't get attached.*

That was the only thing written on that page, and Tommy flipped it over. Disappointment burned at his chest when he saw nothing was written.

He quickly grabbed the next sheet of paper. This time, he saw more words written in the margins.

*Thomas babbled at me and grabbed my hair.*

*It was adorable. It made my heart hurt.*

*I whispered a lullaby to him, and he fell asleep.*

Another page.

*Thomas started crawling. His face was scrunched up in determination. I'm so proud of him.*

And another.

*Thomas laughed as I played a clapping game with him. I couldn't remember the words, so I just grabbed his wrists and clapped his hands together.*

*He laughed.*

*My heart feels warm.*

And the next.

*Thomas took his first steps.*

*He fell down.*

*I hugged him and told him I was proud before he started to cry.*

*I am proud.*

*He took his first steps.*

The next.

*Thomas said his first word.*

*He called me Sammy.*

*I wanted to cry, but I only named him Tommy instead.*

*I pray that Dream isn't reading these, but if someone else is, Thomas is now Tommy.*

*I hope he calls me Sammy again.*

A tear fell onto the page, but Tommy quickly grabbed the next one.

*Dream told me not to get attached.*

*I'm no longer supposed to take care of him. I'm no longer supposed to hold him close and whisper lullabies to him.*

*I'm supposed to guard his room.*

*Dream told me not to get attached.*

A lump was building steadily up in Tommy's throat.

*Tommy turned three today.*

*Dream made him kill someone.*

~~*I hate him.*~~

*I don't understand.*

*I can't only guard him.*

*I won't survive.*

Tommy couldn't breathe.

*Tommy started peeping.*

*Dream told me not to go in.*

*I tried to obey him.*

*I failed.*

*Tommy looked so happy to have someone warm, and I think it was worth it.*

Tommy remembered that. He remembered the loneliness. He remembered Sam being there when Dre—Sam's killer wasn't.

*Tommy asked me what the sky looked like.*

*I said it was blue.*

*I couldn't remember anything else.*

*I miss the sky.*

*I'll never fly again.*

The sky was blue. It was so much bluer than Sam could have ever been able to describe it.

*I told Tommy about Dream.*

*Dream found out.*

*He made me promise not to visit Tommy ever again.*

*I disobeyed.*

*I... I got attached.*

Tommy took a shuddering breath. He remembered that. He still couldn't say his name because of that.

He wondered if he would be able to say his name for Sam.

Tommy shut his eyes, getting ready to do it.

He opened his eyes again.

He wasn't ready for that. Not yet.

He continued reading the notes.

*Tommy asked me what hot chocolate tasted like.*

*I couldn't remember.*

*I snuck up to the upper levels to get some chocolate. I made the hot chocolate when I was supposed to be developing a potion.*

*Tommy thought it was the most delicious thing in the world.*

It was. It was the most delicious thing in the world, because Sam had made it for him.

*Tommy's hair was starting to get out of hand again. I cut it.*

*Dream never asked.*

*Immortality must give you memory issues.*

Tommy brought his hand up to his hair. He should deal with that soon.

*I found Tommy in chains today.*

*Dream chained him for disobeying him.*

*I hate him.*

*I can't watch this anymore.*

*I'm going to get Tommy out. I'm destroying these potions.*

*Tommy deserves to be free.*

*Tommy, if you read this, know that I love you. I love you like the son I never had. I want you to see the sky, to eat strawberries, to drink proper hot chocolate, to live a happy life.*

*I hope I'm there to see you do it.*

*I'm proud of you.*

## Chapter End Notes

Whooooooooo pain. <3

I know i promised 10k but alas it's only 9k.

Thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments (no constructive crit unless i was offensive, typos are fine) <3

Comment or I'll... I'll raise dream from the dead. /lh /j

Y'all already think i will anyway.





# Chapter 31

## Chapter Summary

More recovery.

Funeral time baby <3

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced death, grieving, discrimination, nightmares, ptsd, crying

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy was drowning.

His entire body shook as Sam's words washed over him again and again, trying to take Tommy down with them. Tears soaked his face, and Tommy realized with horror that Sam's pages were getting wet.

Tommy quickly re-folded the pages and placed them underneath the blankets of his nest. He took a shuddering breath as more tears flowed freely.

Were the pages safe underneath the blankets? What if someone stole them? What if they were lost forever? What if someone *read* them?

There were too many emotions. Tommy's chest was warm, but he was crying. Tommy wanted to hide the papers, but he was afraid of them getting lost.

*I hope I can see you do it.*

Then where was Sam? While Tommy had journeyed, traveled, *struggled*, Sam was off being dead. Dead. He wasn't there with Tommy. He didn't help Tommy. He had died right before Tommy's eyes and forced Tommy to be *alone*.

Terrible guilt felt like claws in Tommy's heart, because how could he think those things? How could he think those things about Sam? Sam had loved him, and he was being ungrateful; it wasn't even Sam's fault that he died.

It was Tommy's.

If Tommy hadn't been there, Sam wouldn't have tried to escape. If Tommy hadn't been there, Sam might still be alive.

Tommy curled up into a ball and tugged at his hair, letting out a frustrated shout.

Why did Sam have to leave? Why couldn't he have *stayed*? Tommy wanted him; Tommy needed him. But Sam was nowhere. He was *gone*. He was gone and Tommy would never get to see him laugh again, never get hugged by him again, never be held in Sam's arms as they danced in the cramped cell of Tommy's upbringing.

Tommy wasn't in a cramped cell anymore. He was in a large bedroom, but a terrible part of him wished he was back *there*. A small part of him wished that he could be back in that cell if it meant having Sam back.

"I hate you," Tommy whispered so quietly that even he struggled to hear himself, "I hate you, I hate you, I hate you. Why did you have to *leave me*?"

There was no answer.

Of course, there was no answer, Sam was dead. Tommy would never hear him again.

And everything was too lonely and too cold, and Tommy suddenly remembered that Phil was right outside his door. But did Tommy dare get him? Did Tommy dare seek comfort from him?

Tommy was so cold. Grief was trying to bury him alive.

"I miss you," Tommy sobbed into the air, "I miss you, I miss you, why did you have to *leave*?"

Tommy closed his eyes, and he tried to imagine a hand in his hair, softly telling him that everything was going to be okay. He tried to imagine Sam rubbing his arms gently and promising him he wasn't a monster.

But he felt nothing at all.

Tommy snapped his eyes open and jumped to his feet, marching to the door that Phil was waiting behind.

A small part of Tommy worried that Phil wasn't going to be there at all, that he would have left in the time that Tommy spent reading the notes.

A larger part of him was terrified that Phil was going to be angry at him, that he was going to tell Tommy he was being weak, that Tommy was being ungrateful for not appreciating the gift.

Was Phil going to take the pages away from him? Was Phil going to force Tommy to hand them back over? Would Phil destroy the pages now that they've both read them?

Tommy thought that if Phil tried that, Tommy would attack him.

That would get Tommy chained for sure, but for Sam, it might be worth it.

Sam had been so upset when he saw that his father's killer had chained him. Sam had helped Tommy escape because of it.

Tommy took a deep breath and grasped the handle of the door, thrusting it open.

Phil was still standing there. His face was set in a frown.

Even as tears continued rushing from Tommy's eyes, Tommy felt sick.

"You can't take them away," Tommy blurted out, "I'll attack you. I'll hurt you."

Phil was still frowning. Even if he wasn't angry before, he was definitely angry now. Tommy was going to get chained, and probably locked in a dark room, and it was all his fault—

"I'd *never* take them away," Phil said softly, "Never. Those belong to you. They were made for you."

Tommy held his breath. "I can keep them?"

"Of course, you can."

"You're not..." Tommy swallowed, trying to maintain some semblance of control over himself. "You're not angry?"

Phil gave Tommy a smile, but it didn't reach his eyes. "Of course, I'm not angry," he whispered, "Mate, there's nothing to be angry about."

"I—I'm being weak," Tommy gasped, "I threatened you. I was disrespectful. Please, I wasn't trying to be, I wasn't trying to be disrespectful—"

The world was getting dizzier now. Tommy swayed back and forth, and he tried to use his wings for balance.

"Can I hug you?" Phil whispered.

Tommy didn't know what he was talking about. Why did he want to hug Tommy? Why wasn't he getting angry?

His confusion only swirled with the rest of his emotions, and suddenly a strange heat surged through him.

"Why?" Tommy begged, "Why do you act like this?!"

"Act like what?"

"You're—" Tommy gestured wildly, still struggling to breathe. "You're doing it wrong! You're not getting mad! You—you don't punish me!"

"Baby—" Phil made a sad sound. "—Baby, I love you. I'd never hurt you."

“He loved me.” Tommy could barely see past his tear sand the blackness at the corner of his vision. “He cared about me, but he knew to punish me, he knew to show me my place, I—I —”

“He was wrong.” Tommy tried to focus his attention on Phil’s face. “He was so wrong. You’re a child, you deserved to be loved and cared for, not beaten and punished.”

“You don’t make any sense.” Tommy braced himself on the doorway. “I shouted at you! Shout back!”

“No.”

“I hate you.”

“I don’t think you do.”

Tommy didn’t think he did either.

“Do you want a hug?” Phil asked again, as though Tommy hadn’t just shouted at him. “And no, baby, I’m not angry at you. I love you. You’re allowed to be upset and confused.”

Tommy was still dizzy. The world was spinning.

But all the fight drained out of him, and he felt very, very cold again.

He took a step toward Phil, and Phil wrapped his arms around him. His touch was soft and gentle, and as Tommy sobbed into Phil’s chest, he tucked his chin on top of Tommy’s head

“It’s going to be okay,” Phil promised him.

Tommy only shook his head.

Sam was dead.

Nobody was angry.

But it was only a matter of time before they were.

Eventually, Tommy stopped crying, and he and Phil separated.

Phil showed Tommy a small portion of his bedroom wall that opened up to a small compartment.

“It’s for things that are important to you,” he said, “Wilbur and Techno have one too, but in a different spot.”

Tommy very carefully took the pages that were underneath his blankets and placed it in the secret wall compartment before closing it up.

Tommy swallowed as the wall became a wall once again, completely hiding the pages from everyone.

“Am I allowed to look at them again?” Tommy asked quietly.

Phil squeezed his hand. “Of course, you are. You can look at them whenever you’d like.”

Oh.

Okay.

Before Phil had given him Sam’s notes, Tommy had already made plans with Tubbo and Ranboo to make a garden. They had already explored the palace gardens, which were really more like forests than actual gardens. Gardens were supposed to be small enough to walk around. You weren’t supposed to walk *in* them.

Tubbo seemed to disagree, however, and he was so entranced that he wanted to make his own very beautiful garden. Ranboo wanted to help, and Tommy wanted to contribute as well.

“Tubbo and Ranboo wanted to make a garden,” Tommy said quietly, “The gardener said it was fine, and Schlatt said you’d be okay with it, but...”

He held his breath.

Phil was smiling.

“A garden sounds lovely,” he said, “I can’t wait to see what you three make.”

Tommy only nodded.

He met Tubbo and Ranboo at the center of the big gardens, where the nice gardener, Ponk, was waiting for them. His red wings were matched only by his red arm prosthetic.

A small part of Tommy wanted to ask, but he didn’t want to be disrespectful.

“Hi, Tommy,” Ponk said brightly.

“Sorry for taking so long,” Tommy said quietly.

His wings fidgeted slightly behind him. It was weird having them out in the open all the time. He felt almost exposed, like anyone could look at him and realize what he was.

Ponk didn’t shy away from Tommy or Ranboo, however, and Tommy appreciated it. At least he was being nice outwardly.

“Don’t worry about it,” Tubbo said, “Ponk was just telling us about how he used to be a doctor.”

Tommy blinked, staring up at Ponk in surprise. “Really?”

Ponk nodded. “Yep,” he said, “But then I decided to retire from that profession and be a good old-fashioned gardener.”

“Why?”

“The gardens made me happy.” Ponk shrugged. “Besides, sometimes a new change of pace is nice.”

Tommy had never thought about it that way before.

Ponk led them to a large patch of grass. “This is for you kids,” he said, “Try not to go outside the little boundary.” He pointed to the small stones that surrounded their patch of grass.

All three of them nodded.

“I have some supplies and seeds that you wanted to use over there—” He pointed to a nearby bench. “—but if you need anything else, feel free to ask me, got it?”

“Got it,” Ranboo and Tubbo echoed back to him.

“Yes sir,” Tommy said automatically.

Everybody looked sad for a moment, but then Ponk smiled and told them to have fun. They all nodded before setting to work.

In all honesty, Tommy didn’t know anything about gardening. He knew you had to get rid of weeds and keep your flowers alive, but that was about it.

Tubbo was a good help, however. He told Tommy where to place the yarrow, which were flowers made up of smaller, yellow flowers. He let Tommy use one of Tubbo’s green feathers on the bluebell seeds, and they sprouted up.

“My dad told me that bluebells represented everlasting love,” Ranboo said quietly.

Tommy felt warm inside as he brushed his fingers carefully against the flowers. “Oh.” He pointed to the yarrow. “What does that represent?”

“Um, I think it’s love and healing?”

Tubbo looked up from the rose bush he was inspecting. “I didn’t know you knew flower meanings.”

Ranboo looked a bit surprised. “Doesn’t everyone?”

“I know some,” Tubbo conceded, “But not a lot like you.”

Tommy was busy staring at the rosebush.

“Ranboo’s garden had roses.”

Tubbo made a face. “Yeah, but nobody said we couldn’t do repeats,” he said, sticking his tongue out. He bent over and clipped three roses from the bush. “Besides, I really like yellow roses.”

Tommy watched as Tubbo began clipping the thorns from the stems.

“Why?”

Tubbo grinned as he walked up to Ranboo and Tommy. Tommy’s heart jumped in surprise when Tubbo tucked one of the yellow roses behind Tommy’s ear.

“Yellow roses represent friendship.”

Tubbo tucked his own rose behind his hair.

Tommy’s throat felt as though it was closing off slightly. He knew that he was friends with Tubbo and Ranboo, but this confirmation.

Tommy blinked away the tears.

“Oh,” he whispered, “I... I like that.”

“Me too,” Ranboo whispered.

Tubbo hugged them.

Later, as they ate a snack that Ponk had brought out to them, Tommy pointed to the small tree that they had planted in the center of their small garden. With the help of using Tubbo’s feathers, it already had some white flowers blooming from its spindly branches.

“What about that one?”

“Blackthorn?” Ranboo swallowed and smiled. “My dad told me it meant overcoming hardships. Like a dark night is over and there’s hope for the morning.”

Tommy hummed, staring at the tree.

Was he like the blackthorn? Was there hope for his morning?

“It’s pretty,” he said quietly.

“Yeah,” Ranboo agreed, “It is.”

Tommy was walking down the hall, ready to clean up from getting pretty filthy. Tommy had intentionally wore less nice clothes to gardening, but all of the clothes were so *nice*.

So when he spotted Wilbur walking down the hall with three other people that Tommy recognized, Tommy had half a mind to turn around and run in the other direction. Would Wilbur get upset over his filthiness?

But it was too late. Wilbur had already spotted them.

“Tommy!” he called out. He broke out into a run toward him, and Tommy flinched when Wilbur suddenly engulfed him in a hug.

Wilbur quickly pulled himself away. “Sorry,” he said quickly, “I shouldn’t have... sorry.”

Tommy wasn’t sure why Wilbur was apologizing.

“Anyway,” Wilbur said slowly. He sounded breathless. “I’d like to introduce you to some people, if you’re alright with it.”

Tommy hummed. Meeting new people always turned out good or bad. Bad, because sometimes they were visibly afraid of Tommy. Other times, they’d give Tommy a nasty look.

But other people, like Ponk, were nicer. They smiled at Tommy and didn’t keep glancing at his wings like they might spontaneously kill them.

“Are they nice?” he asked.

Wilbur smiled and nodded. “And if they’re not, I’ll kick them out.”

Tommy took a deep breath. He trusted Wilbur. If he said his friends were nice, then his friends were probably nice.

Tommy could do this.

“Okay,” Tommy said, clenching his fists, “Okay.”

Wilbur smiled, and he nodded to the three people that were standing a little distance away from them.

Wilbur still hadn’t mentioned Tommy’s dirty clothes.

Tommy recognized the people approaching him. They were all from that day. The day his father’s killer had... had been killed.

“Tommy,” Wilbur said, “This is Niki—” He pointed to the person with pink wings. “—Fundy—” Orange wings. “—and Eret.” Red wings.

“I use all pronouns,” Eret said.

Tommy’s eyes widened. “Like Ponk?” he asked.

Ponk had explained to him what it meant to be nonbinary and how pronouns worked.

Eret laughed. “Yeah, like Ponk.”

Tommy told Eret that his pronouns were he/him. Niki’s apparently were she/her, and Fundy’s were he/him.



When Tommy glanced up at Wilbur, Wilbur smiled and ruffled Tommy's hair, saying that as far as he knew, Wilbur, Technoblade, and Phil all used he/him pronouns.

Tommy let out a breath of relief. He didn't want to accidentally use the wrong pronouns and get them upset.

Niki, Fundy, and Eret were nice.

"I own a bakery," she said, "Wilbur tells me that you like cake."

Tommy nodded quickly. He really liked cake. It was one of the most delicious things he had ever eaten.

"I can show you how to bake it," she offered, "There's a little spot in the kitchens that are reserved for royalty and friends of royalty to mess around in without disturbing anyone who is actually cooking meals."

Tommy hadn't realized that the castle had multiple kitchens.

But the idea of baking sounded really nice, so he nodded.

The entire time they walked down the halls to the kitchens, Niki, Wilbur, Fundy, and Eret all spoke to each other like they had known each other for a long time. Based on the stories they told, they probably had known each other for a long time.

"Tommy, Tommy, once I convinced Eret to make my eyes glow," Fundy said, "And then I went around in the dark and scared the hell out of Wilbur. He shrieked."

"I did not," Wilbur sputtered.

Tommy looked over at Eret. "You can make stuff glow?"

Eret nodded. "Yeah."

Tommy bit the inside of his cheek. That sounded really nice. Could Eret make things in his bedroom glow? Would that make the darkness less terrifying?

He didn't say anything about it, though.

They made it to the kitchens, and Niki showed Tommy how to make a cake. They made an even bigger mess than gardening, but nobody seemed to mind.

While the cake was in the oven, however, Wilbur frowned. "Your hair is a bit of a mess," he informed Tommy, "We might have to get someone for that."

Tommy frowned, tugging at his tangled and slightly shaggy hair. "Sorry."

"Don't be." Wilbur shrugged. "It just needs a trim and a proper brush."

Sam used to trim Tommy's hair.

It would be weird letting someone else do it.

Wilbur took Tommy to a royal hairdresser, and they smiled and told Tommy that there wasn't anything to be afraid of.

Tommy still held tightly to Wilbur's hand the entire time, whimpering when the person doing his hair had to deal with messier knots. He shuddered as he heard the snipping of the scissors in his hair.

Tommy wasn't sure when they were done, but his entire head felt lighter.

He quickly jumped off of the chair he was sitting on and looked at Wilbur anxiously.

"Does it look bad?" he asked.

Wilbur smiled and shook his head, ruffling Tommy's hair. "You look perfect."

Tommy smiled.

They returned to the kitchens, and Niki's cake was finished and frosted. Niki smiled when she saw Tommy.

"I like your hair," she said kindly.

Fundy handed Tommy a plate with a single slice of cake on it.

Tommy took a bite.

It was so soft, and sweet, and flavorful, and delicious, that Tommy could barely comprehend it.

Instead he burst into tears.

"Oh no!" Niki looked upset. "Is there something wrong?"

Tommy shook his head, trying to stop the tears. "No, I'm sorry, it's just really good, I'm sorry."

Niki hugged him, and Tommy tried to ignore everyone else's sad stares.

Tommy woke up in the middle of the night again, a silent scream on his lips.

The room was so, so dark, and Tommy felt trapped in his nest, but there was nowhere to go, and *he* was in the corner—

Tommy jumped to his feet with a gasp. His heart felt like it was being squeezed by him, and Tommy was going to die, he was going to be taken—

But no. Nobody was in the corner. The room was empty.

Tommy shuddered, trying to hold back tears. The room was empty. Nobody was in there. His father's killer wasn't there. Tommy was alone.

Tommy was alone, and he felt so cold.

Tommy picked up a blanket from his nest and wrapped it around himself, trying to feel warm. For some reason, however, he only felt colder inside.

Maybe he could take a walk? As long as he didn't wake anyone up, it should be fine... right?

Tommy picked up Henry, and not taking the blanket off of his shoulders, Tommy slowly crept out of his bedroom and began walking down the long hallways.

The hallways were slightly illuminated by torches, but it was still incredibly dark. His footsteps echoed hauntingly. Tommy squeezed Henry close to himself for comfort.

He could spot a few guards at the entrances to balconies. They didn't bother him.

Tommy wasn't sure how long he wandered the palace before he saw the door to the library cracked open slightly.

Why was it open?

Curiosity driving him, Tommy crept closer to the library door, peeking through the crack.

Technoblade was sitting on the ground, doing something with a piece of cloth. There was a lantern sitting next to him, and Tommy saw him poke something sharp and silver through the cloth.

A small part of Tommy wanted to go inside and ask him what he was doing.

But a larger part of Tommy knew better. Technoblade wouldn't have wanted to be bothered anyway.

Tommy let himself watch Technoblade a little bit longer before turning around and heading back to his bedroom.

The next day, Tommy was returning from breakfast when he saw a woman standing in front of Sam's portrait.

She had white wings and fluffy hair, and Tommy realized that this was Puffy.

Tommy held his breath. Puffy had known Sam. Would she be angry at Tommy for causing his death? Would she try to hurt him?

But Tubbo, Wilbur, and Technoblade had all said that Puffy was nice.

But how could Tommy be sure?

Tommy stood and stared at Puffy for a long time, and she didn't once look up from the painting of Sam. Tommy wasn't sure he could blame her. Tommy wanted to stare at the painting for a really long time too, that's why he was there to begin with.

Finally, Puffy looked up, and she turned toward Tommy.

Her already sad looking face looked even more sad, although she did give Tommy a smile. "Hi," she said.

"Hi," Tommy said weakly, "Sorry, I can go..."

"You don't have to. Come closer, even." Tommy walked up to Puffy. She glanced back at the painting. "You knew Sam?"

Tommy swallowed. "Yeah," he said quietly, "Um... he talked about you."

Puffy made a surprised noise. "He did?"

Tommy nodded, twisting his fingers together. "Um, he said you were his best friend."

Puffy's face looked sadder than before. Tommy wondered if he was only making things worse. "Yeah." Puffy's voice was a whisper. "He was my best friend too."

Tommy wondered if he should leave. Puffy was clearly only getting more and more sad, and —

"What was he like?" Puffy suddenly asked, "You... you knew him after he was taken. Right?" Her eyes widened. "You don't have to tell me anything if you don't want to, of course..."

"He was nice," Tommy interrupted. He shrunk away. "Sorry."

Puffy shook her head and smiled. "No, it's fine. He was nice?"

Tommy nodded. "He, um, he took care of me." His voice wavered. "He was like my dad."

"Was he a good one?"

*I'm proud of you.*

Tommy's eyes burned. "He was the best."

In a quieter voice, he said, "I miss him."

"Yeah." Puffy's eyes were red. "I miss him too."

Later that day, Tommy spotted Purpled sitting in a tree in the gardens. None of his other friends were around.

“Where’s everyone else?” Tommy asked.

Purpled sighed from his spot in the tree. “Alyssa’s trying to stop Charlie from turning random things in the palace into slime, and Hannah is admiring the roses in the next garden over.”

“Oh.” Tommy hesitated. “Do you want company?”

Purpled sighed. “Sure.”

Tommy had plenty of practice in climbing trees during his first few months of travel, and he quickly scrambled up to a branch next to Purpled.

“So...” Purpled sighed. “How’s life?”

Tommy shrugged. “Weird,” he confessed, “Confusing.”

Purpled glanced up at the sky. “Confusing is certainly a word for it.”

Tommy frowned. “Did I—”

Purpled quickly shook his head. “It’s nothing you did, kid,” he said, “It’s just...” He glared. “I work for years for this one thing, and then I just throw it away, just like that!”

Tommy didn’t know what Purpled was talking about.

“I’m sorry.”

Purpled groaned. “I know I made the right decision, but... ugh! I hate him! He’s so *stupid*. Why couldn’t he have just been an upstanding citizen? Why did he have to listen to *Dream*?”

Tommy flinched at the name.

“Sorry,” Purpled said, “I don’t mean to dump this on you, it’s just—” Purpled paused. “—it’s a lot.”

“Do you want a hug?”

Purpled froze, and Tommy froze as well. “What?”

“Well, I just, hugs seem to be what people do when you’re sad, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean—”

“Woah, woah, you’re fine.” Purpled hesitated. “I wouldn’t mind a hug right now, actually.”

Oh. Okay.

Tommy wasn’t sure if he was going to do this right.

He quietly shuffled to Purpled’s branch, moving his arms around Purpled’s body. Purpled wrapped his arms back around Tommy.

“Is this good?” Tommy asked nervously.

“Yeah...” Purpled’s voice made a strange choking sound. “Yeah, it’s great.”

Tommy released a breath of relief.

They hugged for a while, the wind ruffling Tommy’s hair.

“Thanks,” Purpled whispered.

“You’re welcome,” Tommy whispered back.

That night, Tommy woke up again.

He remembered this dream slightly more clearly than the others. Sam had been there, and there were chains around his neck. He promised Tommy he loved him, and then Tommy had been in the water, surrounded by portraits that looked like all of his family and friends—

And then he woke up.

Tommy held the stuffed... fish... he was pretty sure it was as close to him as he held Henry. He had named the fish Clementine.

Tommy buried his face in both Clementine and Henry, but his heart was still thrumming uncomfortably, and Tommy felt like he was drowning again.

Tommy stood up and left his bedroom again.

This time, he went straight to the library. Just like the night before, Technoblade was sitting in the library, a lantern illuminating him as he did whatever he was doing with the cloth.

Tommy sat down outside of the door, content to watch for as long as Technoblade was in there.

Technoblade didn’t look up from his fabric when he spoke. “I know you’re out there.”

Tommy jumped to his feet with a startled peep.

This time, Technoblade did stand up. “I’m not mad,” he said, “You can come in, you know.”

Tommy didn’t know, but at the invitation, he slowly stepped into the library.

“What are you doing?” he asked quietly.

Technoblade didn’t smile, but his face looked softer as he patted the ground next to him. “Here, I’ll show you.”

Tommy walked to the spot Technoblade had patted and sat down. From this close, Tommy could see that there was a string connected to the tiny silver weapon Technoblade was stabbing into the cloth.

“This is sewing,” Technoblade explained.

Tommy’s eyes widened. So, this was what made the stuffed animals?

“How do you do it?” he whispered.

Technoblade actually smiled this time. “I take this needle, and I take some really thin string, and I use it to put different pieces of cloth together.”

“Isn’t that dangerous?”

The needle looked like it hurt, and there were a lot of other pins in the two pieces of fabric.

Technoblade shook his head. “If you’re careful, it’s not a problem. Besides, pricking yourself isn’t that painful.”

“Oh.”

Technoblade cleared his throat. “Do you... want me to teach you?”

It didn’t take much hesitation before Tommy was quickly bobbing his head up and down.

He wanted to sew.

He wanted to create stuffed animals.

“Alright,” Technoblade said, “What animal do you want to create?”

Tommy hummed. He didn’t know very many animals.

“What’s your favorite animal?” he asked quietly.

Technoblade froze, and Tommy’s chest hurt.

“Polar bears are nice,” he finally said.

Tommy nodded. “Then I want to make one of those.”

Technoblade hesitated for some reason. “Okay, Toms.”

Technoblade cut out some pieces of white cloth and showed Tommy how to pin them together. Then, he showed Tommy how to begin weaving the needle in and out of the cloth.

Tommy tried to make his stitches as small and neat as Technoblade’s, even though it took him a really long time.

He was falling asleep on top of his work before he finished.

“I think that’s enough for tonight,” Technoblade said, taking the stuff away from Tommy.

Tommy was too tired to protest. Instead, he just leaned against Technoblade's shoulder and let his eyes drift closed.

He was dimly aware of someone picking him up and placing him inside a pile of blankets.

It felt safe.

When Tommy woke up again, it was broad daylight, and Technoblade was gone.

Ranboo and Tubbo were on a mission.

"Tommy deserves a pet," Tubbo had declared when the two of them were alone in the garden one day.

Ranboo's eyes widened at that statement. "He *does*," he whispered.

"You deserve a pet too," Tubbo decided.

Ranboo sputtered. "But, I—" He scowled. "If anyone deserves a pet, it's *you*."

Tubbo huffed. He didn't particularly think he needed a pet. He had been living a happy and safe life for years, unlike Ranboo and Tommy, who seemed afraid of shadows sometimes.

But if Ranboo thought so, it would probably be best to not argue about it.

"Fine," he sighed, "How about we all get each other pets?"

Ranboo hummed. "Should we wait for Tommy?"

"No!" Tubbo exclaimed in horror, "It needs to be a surprise!"

And that was how Ranboo and Tubbo found themselves in the royal farm, surveying all the animals.

"No killing the animals," one of the farm-hands told Ranboo.

Ranboo flinched. "I wouldn't do that," he protested.

"Yeah, if anyone, I'm more likely to kill the animals," Tubbo said truthfully. He'd been tempted for ages now to get his hands on one of Wilbur's feathers and use it to cause chaos.

But then he imagined how mad his dad would probably be, and he stopped himself from the temptation.

The farm hand gave them both suspicious looks, and Tubbo flipped them off.

They ignored him and moved on to searching for good animals for each other.



“Oh, look.” Ranboo was crouching down in front of a black cat, who was surrounded by small kittens. “Excuse me?” Ranboo was speaking to different farm hand, who was shoveling manure.

“Yeah, kid?”

“Can I have one of these kittens?” Ranboo asked, sounding nervous, “I promise I won’t kill it.”

“Don’t worry,” the farm hand sighed, “I believe you. Any reason you want the kitten?”

Ranboo’s face turned red. “Um... pet?”

The farm-hand laughed. “Alright,” he agreed, “You can take *one*.”

Ranboo frowned in confusion, but he took one of the black kittens gingerly in his hand.

“Why—”

“I have a daughter your age,” the farm-hand said, shrugging, “Call me soft.”

*Soft*, Tubbo internally called him.

“Um, excuse me,” he tried to seem as polite as possible to the farm-hand, “But the prince would also like an animal to take care of him. Do you have any particularly protective animals you can spare?”

Ranboo glared. “Tubbo needs an animal too.”

The farm-hand laughed, although he looked shaken from the prince comment. “You kids know one of the princes?”

“We’re his best friends.”

“You look a little young for that, kiddos.”

Tubbo squared his chest. “We’re prince *Tommy*’s best friends.”

The farm-hand’s eyes widened. “You mean the youngest? There’ve been rumors, but...”

Oh, was Tubbo not supposed to say that?

The farm-hand quickly led Tubbo and Ranboo to the chicken coop. “Anyway, I know the perfect animal for the prince if you’re looking for protective.” He pulled a hen from the coop. She squawked aggressively, her feathers puffed up. “Something went wrong with her eggs, and her chicks didn’t hatch. She hasn’t been the same ever since.”

Tubbo carefully took the chicken in his hands, looking her straight in the eyes. “Hello,” he said, “Would you like a human child?”

The chicken squawked aggressively.

Tubbo grinned. “I’ll take that as a yes.”

Tommy had been sitting in the library, reading a book on different flower meanings when Tubbo and Ranboo opened the doors very loudly.

Tommy nervously glanced around at the other people reading, but there were only a few glances upwards before people resumed their reading.

“Hey, Tommy!” Tubbo exclaimed excitedly, “We’ve got something for you!”

Tommy winced at the noise, and he quickly jumped to his feet, pushing Tubbo and Ranboo out of the library before someone got angry at the noise.

Tubbo frowned. “What’s wrong?”

“Um, you were a little loud.” Tommy ducked his head down. “I didn’t want other people to be upset.”

Tubbo’s eyes widened. “Oh, that makes sense. Sorry.”

“That’s alright.” Tommy’s eyes landed on a miniature cat sitting in Ranboo’s hands and a cute animal sitting down at Tubbo’s ankles. “You said you, um, you had something?”

Tubbo nodded excitedly. “Yeah!”

He pulled something out from behind his back, revealing a very plump looking bird.

Tubbo placed the bird in Tommy’s hands before Tommy could say anything. The bird was heavy, and Tommy took a moment to be able to get a proper hold on it and all of its feathers.

Tommy stared at the bird.

The bird stared at him.

“This is your new child,” Tubbo whispered to the bird.

The bird tilted its head before suddenly rubbing Tommy’s neck with its head, letting out a strange clucking sound.

Tommy blinked, not at all sure what was happening.

“It’s a pet,” Ranboo explained, “Like... an animal that’s also your best friend.”

“I have a dog—” Tubbo pointed to the animal sitting at his heels. “—and Ranboo has a kitten.”

“A kitten is a baby cat,” Ranboo clarified.

Tommy looked down at the bird in his hands. He knew it was a special type of bird. What was it he read about birds?

“And I have... a goose?” Tommy asked hesitantly.

Tubbo and Ranboo didn’t say anything for a moment, and Tommy felt a low sinking feeling of dread.

“It’s a chicken,” Tubbo said.

Tommy’s face felt like it was on fire. “Oh.”

“*But,*” Ranboo said, “Goose sounds like a great name for a chicken.”

Tubbo nodded instantly. “Oh yeah, it definitely suits her.”

Tommy hugged the chicken closer to himself. “Really?”

“Definitely,” Ranboo said.

Tommy gave them a small smile. He looked down at Goose, who was still tilting her head at him. “Hello, Goose.”

The chicken made another clucking sound.

Philza wasn’t angry that Tommy now had a pet chicken.

“As long as she doesn’t make a mess, I don’t see an issue with it,” he told Tommy, “And make sure she spends a lot of time outside, alright?”

Tommy nodded. He liked spending time outside anyway.

However, now it was time to sleep, so Wilbur helped Tommy make a straw nest for Goose to sleep on.

Wilbur gave Tommy a hug before going to bed in his own bedroom, and Tommy curled up in his nest, hoping to sleep through the night for once.

His father’s killer was standing over him, handing him a black feather. They were standing in the royal gardens, and his father’s killer pointed to the blackthorn tree.

“Kill it,” he said.

Tommy didn’t want to kill it. He didn’t want to be there. He just wanted to be safe again, please, he thought he was safe—

A strange sensation in Tommy's ankle caused Tommy's eyes to fly open, and he breathed heavily.

Goose was sitting on Tommy's ankles, tilting her head at Tommy.

Did she... wake him up?

Tommy's face was wet, and Goose hopped down from Tommy's ankles to rub the top of her head against his cheek.

Tommy smiled, and he gently petted Goose with his finger. Goose let out a quiet clucking sound.

Tommy tried to roll over and fall asleep, but he remember his father's killer, and the blackthorn tree, and his heart started racing.

Oh well. Tommy had never finished making that polar bear with Technoblade either.

Tommy grabbed a blanket and wrapped it around himself for protection as he stepped out into the hall. Goose followed him at his heels, and Tommy was glad of the company.

As Tommy approached the library, a terrible thought occurred to him.

What if Techno wasn't there? What if Tommy was going to find an empty library? What if—

But Tommy turned the corner of the hallway, and the library door was cracked, just like it always was.

Did Technoblade even sleep?

This time, Tommy didn't wait at the door. Instead, he took a deep breath. Technoblade wouldn't be mad. He wanted to show Tommy how to make stuffed animals before. He wouldn't be mad.

Tommy stepped inside the library.

Technoblade looked up from his sewing, and his eyes narrowed at the sight of Goose.

"Is she going to poop on our hard work?" he asked instantly.

Tommy's face felt warm again, and his heart skipped a beat. "I don't think so," he said slowly. He glanced down at Goose. "She... she hasn't—"

Technoblade nodded. "That's fine then." His face was soft again. "You want to continue?"

Tommy sat down next to Technoblade, and Goose sat down in his lap as Tommy continued working on the polar bear.

"Why are you always awake?" Tommy asked, "Don't you sleep?"

Technoblade didn't reply.

Tommy winced. Had he said too much? Maybe he should just take it back.

“I do sleep,” Technoblade said, “But I have a hard time of it sometimes. I used to pace around the halls, obsessively checking to make sure everyone was safe, but Phil suggested I try this instead. It’s calming.”

Tommy understood what Technoblade meant.

This time, Tommy actually completed the sewing bits, and Technoblade showed Tommy how to stuff it with cotton.

Tommy sewed off the last little bit, and Technoblade helped him tie off the very small thread, snipping the extra thread with his scissors.

And then it was done.

Tommy stared at the polar bear he finished sewing, and then he glanced at the shirt that Technoblade seemed to be working on. Technoblade’s work was neat and professional looking. In comparison, Tommy’s bear didn’t look like much.

“That’s very good,” Technoblade said, getting a good look at the polar bear in Tommy’s hands, “Especially for your first time.”

“Really?” Tommy frowned. “It’s bad, though.”

“Everyone starts from somewhere,” Technoblade said, “This is certainly better than *my* first stuffed animal.”

For some reason, a lump formed in Tommy’s throat, and Tommy looked away as he thrust the stuffed animal into Technoblade’s hands.

“Wha—”

“It’s for you,” Tommy said before he could stop himself, “Because you made me all those other stuffed animals.”

Technoblade didn’t say anything for a moment, and Tommy shut his eyes and held his breath, even while Goose snuggled into him.

“Thank you, Toms.” Technoblade’s voice sounded choked, and Tommy’s eyes flew open.

Technoblade was carefully holding the polar bear, looking at it like it was the most valuable treasure in the world.

“I love it,” Technoblade said. He cleared his throat. “Thank you.”

“Really?” Tommy hadn’t realized Technoblade would like it *this* much.

“Yeah, it’s, it’s the best gift I’ve ever received.”

Tommy narrowed his eyes at him. "You're lying."

Technoblade sighed. "Fine." He stared Tommy right in the eyes. "It's the best non-living gift I've ever received."

Tommy didn't know what that meant.

"Can I start on another one?" Tommy didn't feel that tired. "What's Wilbur's favorite animal?"

Wilbur woke up to someone shaking him by the shoulder.

Groaning tiredly, Wilbur rolled over to give whoever was interrupting his slumber this early in the morning a certified glare.

But Technoblade wasn't the one waking him up.

It was Tommy.

Tommy's face was pale, and Wilbur instantly schooled his expressions into something more pleasant. He shouldn't get mad at Tommy for waking him up. As a matter of fact, he wasn't mad at all.

Wilbur could spot Technoblade in the doorway, but that didn't matter, because Tommy was here.

"What's goin' on, Toms?" Wilbur asked groggily.

"I made something for you." Tommy's face was bright scarlet now, and he thrust a stuffed animal into Wilbur's arms.

Wilbur blinked, trying to focus his vision on the stuffed animal Tommy had given him.

It was... an orca. That fish creature that Wilbur had liked the look of when reading an illustrated book about animals not seen in the Empire.

"I made it," Tommy said. He twisted his sleeves. "Do you like it?"

Wilbur thought his heart was going to burst. Tommy made this. Tommy made this for him.

"I love it," he whispered. He looked up at Tommy. "Can I give you a hug?"

Tommy nodded, and Wilbur held him tightly, almost afraid to let him go.

A few months ago, this would all have been nothing but a dream. A few months ago, Thomas was dead, and there was nothing they could do about it.

Now, Tommy was alive, and he was so, so wonderful, and Wilbur would give up the world for him.

“Thank you,” Wilbur whispered.

Wilbur loosened his hold on Tommy, giving Tommy the room to leave the hug whenever he wanted.

But Tommy stayed, and it didn’t take long to figure out that Wilbur now had a sleeping child on his hands.

“He spent all night making that for you,” Technoblade whispered, “He’s probably exhausted.”

Wilbur gave Technoblade a tired glare. “You should sleep too, you know.”

Technoblade shrugged. “I’m not tired.”

Wilbur’s glare did not abate. “Technoblade. Nest. Now.”

Technoblade sighed, but that didn’t stop him from crawling into Wilbur’s nest. Tommy’s chicken sat down on the edge of Wilbur’s nest, as though she would guard them all.

It didn’t take long before Wilbur heard Technoblade’s even hum of sleep, and Wilbur himself forced his eyes to shut.

The next morning, the sound of knocking filled Wilbur’s bedroom.

Tommy shot up instantly, muttering apologies that made Wilbur’s heart ache.

Technoblade was already on his feet, flying toward the door like there might be some battle he was supposed to be facing an hour ago.

But as soon as the door came flying open, the only person revealed was Phil.

And Phil was holding a very long package.

“Hi, Tech.” Phil sounded tired, but Wilbur could see a warmth in his eyes when he spotted Tommy in the bedroom. “Toms. Wilbur, I have something for you.”

Wilbur had a feeling he knew what it was.

Wilbur forced himself out of the nest, putting on his sloppily made prosthetic before marching to the door.

Phil smiled before placing the long box in Wilbur’s arms.

Wilbur very carefully sat down on the ground and unlocked the clasps of the box.

And sitting inside the case was a very carefully crafted prosthetic wing. Cloth replaced feathers, and smooth, polished wood replaced skeletal structure.

It looked so much better than Wilbur's current prosthetic.

"With enough practice, you should be able to glide without any issue," Phil explained to Wilbur.

Wilbur's chest hurt.

Gliding wasn't flying.

But it was certainly better than nothing at all. At least now, Wilbur could climb to the tops of buildings without worrying about falling to his death, something he'd never thought he'd have to worry about before. At least now, Wilbur could be in the sky again.

"Thank you," Wilbur whispered.

Phil smiled and kissed Wilbur on top of the head. "Of course."

That day, Wilbur and Technoblade took the three kids and Schlatt to the royal stables.

"Travel is mostly done by flight," Technoblade explained to Tommy, "But horseback riding is a good skill to have."

Tommy had seen pictures of horses, and he had a horse stuffed animal in his nest.

But nothing could prepare him for how *huge* they were.

The horse's eyes felt as though he was staring into Tommy's soul, and Tommy sunk deep into Wilbur's side, clinging onto his shirt like a pathetic child.

"It's okay, Tommy," Wilbur said soothingly, "The horse is beautifully trained. He won't hurt you."

"What if I hurt him?" Tommy whispered, a new fear blooming in his chest, "What if I accidentally kill him? What if I accidentally kill Goose?" Tommy let go of Wilbur and stepped away from him. "What if—"

"You're not going to accidentally kill anyone," Schlatt said, "Powers don't randomly activate. You've never accidentally killed anyone before."

"I accidentally killed my mum," Tommy whispered.

A heavy silence filled the entire room, and Technoblade's voice was sharp when he next spoke. "Who told you that?"

Tommy hesitated. "*Him.*" He shuddered. "He said... he said I accidentally used my power to kill her." Tommy looked away. "And she's not around anymore, is she?"



Wilbur looked as though Tommy had taken a knife and stabbed him through the chest. Tommy wondered if this would finally be the time for him to be angry.

“That’s a lie.” Technoblade’s voice *was* angry, and Tommy flinched despite the victorious feeling in his chest. Finally, he was figuring things out. Finally, they were getting mad. “*You* didn’t do anything to our mother.”

Tommy kept his eyes down at the floor, because now that he had successfully made Technoblade mad, there was no point in making the punishment worse than it was already going to be.

“I’m sorry.”

The anger on Technoblade’s face didn’t fade. “I’m not mad at you. I’m angry at *him*.”

Tommy flinched at the venom in his words.

“Pull yourself together,” Schlatt told Technoblade, “You’re scaring him.”

Technoblade sighed and stepped out of the stables, and Wilbur rested his hands on Tommy’s shoulders.

Tommy flinched.

“Tommy,” he said softly, “You didn’t kill our mother. You *couldn’t* have killed our mother. You were a baby. You didn’t have any magic yet.”

“But she’s dead!” Tommy protested, letting his voice get louder, “And *he* said—”

“He was lying.” Wilbur’s face was firm, but his eyes were soft. “Tommy, our mother got very sick. You didn’t kill her. By accident or otherwise.”

Goose let out a loud squawk. It was probably in agreement.

“But... he, he...” Tommy wasn’t sure what he was supposed to say. He knew his father’s killer lied. He knew that, and yet...

“He lied.”

Tommy took a deep breath. “He lied?”

Wilbur smiled and nodded. “Yes.”

Tommy wasn’t sure if he believed it, but he nodded anyway. Wilbur had told him before that powers only came in at the age of three, and Tommy had been with Sam nearly his entire life.

Technoblade returned back to the room, his previous anger gone. He gave Tommy a guilty look. “Sorry for before. I was mad at Dream, not you.”

Tommy nodded. “It’s okay.”

They all stood in silence, and eventually, Ranboo spoke. "Should we... ride the horses?"

Schlatt apparently knew how to ride. "It's from my time being rich and famous at the capital," he explained to the others. Therefore, he helped Tubbo onto a horse, telling him how to sit and making distressed sounds whenever it looked like Tubbo might fall off.

Technoblade helped Ranboo, congratulating him on his form.

And Wilbur helped Tommy.

"You promise I won't kill it?" Tommy whispered as he stood next to the horse.

"I promise." Wilbur smiled. "I'll be right beside you the entire time, and unless you intentionally crush a feather in your hand and touch the horse, there should be no reason for the horse to drop dead."

Tommy took a deep breath. Wilbur was right.

Wilbur helped Tommy onto the horse, and Tommy trembled as he grabbed onto the reigns. It was even more frightening from up here, towering over Wilbur.

"If you get too scared," Wilbur said, "We can stop, alright?"

Tommy swallowed. He didn't want to get scared. He wanted to make Wilbur proud.

"Alright."

Wilbur led the horse Tommy was riding out onto the field, and Tommy held onto the reigns so tightly that his knuckles were turning white. The horse kept moving up and down from underneath Tommy, and it was a strange sensation.

It was also kind of fun.

Eventually, however, Tommy began feeling a little sick, and he took a deep breath before turning to Wilbur.

"I think I'm done now," he said a little bit louder than was probably necessary.

Wilbur smiled and helped Tommy off of the horse. "I'm proud of you."

Tommy had no idea why.

That evening, Wilbur had invited Niki, Fundy, and Eret to dinner.

They were fun, adding even more life to the table. The three of them asked Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo how they were enjoying the palace, and all of them mostly focused on the garden they spent most of their time in.

At one point in dinner, however, Wilbur made a little "oh!" sound.

“What is it?” Niki asked, looking up from her soup.

“I’ve got something for you.” Wilbur reached into his pocket and pulled out a fancy looking box, and he placed it on the table in front of Niki.

Niki’s eyes widened, and she opened it. “Oh Wilbur, you shouldn’t have.”

Wilbur sniffed. “Of course, I had to,” he said, “These represent our friendship, and I wasn’t about to let you wear ones that were dirtied by *Dream*.”

Tommy flinched, causing Wilbur to flinch.

Niki lifted a golden earring with an emerald inlaid in it and put it in her ear. “What happened to the old ones?”

“I’ve smelted them down,” Wilbur said.

Fundy laughed.

“Oh, actually, that leads into another thing,” Phil said, “Tommy, Tubbo and Ranboo are your friends, right?”

Tommy blinked. That was a sudden question. “Yeah?”

“No, we’re just coworkers,” Tubbo said sarcastically.

Tommy stared at Tubbo in horror, but Phil only laughed.

“What jewelry would you two like?” Phil asked, “And you as well, Schlatt.”

Schlatt and Tubbo’s eyes widened, but Ranboo looked as confused as Tommy.

“For what?” Ranboo asked.

“It’s a royal tradition,” Technoblade explained, “Good friends of the royal family get an emerald piece of jewelry so that everyone knows that you’re friends with us.”

Ranboo frowned. “Isn’t that a good way to become a target?”

“You can hide them in public,” Fundy said, revealing his bracelet under his sleeve, “But it’s a good way to get guards to shut up when they ask what you’re doing in the palace.”

“Oh,” Ranboo said. He hesitated before pointing to Niki. “Can I get earrings?”

Phil smiled. “Of course. Tubbo?”

“A bracelet please.”

“Bracelet as well,” Schlatt said, his voice sounding awed, “Your majesty—”

Philza laughed. "Schlatt, you took care of my son when you could've cast him aside. I owe you everything for that."

Schlatt's face turned red.

"Tommy, your circlet is being made," Phil continued, "But you can choose whether or not you want to wear it. Wilbur and Technoblade quite literally have to dust theirs off when special occasions happen."

"Circlet?"

"It's like a crown but less fancy." Wilbur gestured to his head. "Like a circle."

That was only sort of helpful, but Tommy only nodded.

The next day, Tommy was sitting in the gardens. Technoblade had wanted to show Ranboo how to play chess, which Tommy thought was boring, and Schlatt had dragged Tubbo out to the market, which Tommy thought was terrifying.

So, Tommy was sitting in the garden alone, doing wing exercises that would apparently help his wings grow strong enough to fly again and watching as Goose dug her little feet into the dirt.

Suddenly, Goose marched up to Tommy, holding something in her beak. She placed whatever she was holding into Tommy's hand.

Tommy stared at the small bronze coin. He smiled.

"Thank you, Goose," he said quietly.

Goose gave Tommy a tilt of the head before marching back out to dig in the grass.

Tommy heard the sound of heavy footsteps in the grass, and he looked up to see Wilbur heading toward Tommy, holding some sort of an instrument.

Wilbur stopped a few feet away from Tommy. "Can I sit here?"

Tommy nodded, and he watched in interest as Wilbur sat himself down and placed the instrument in his lap.

"This is a guitar," Wilbur explained.

"Oh."

Wilbur placed his fingers on the guitar strings and began doing an up and down motion with his other hand.

And then there was music.

Tommy had heard music a few times before, but he couldn't help but to be entranced by the way Wilbur made his song. The music wasn't only pretty, it tugged at Tommy's heart in a way other music hadn't.

Maybe it was the song Wilbur was singing, but Tommy didn't completely understand it.

When Wilbur finished, Tommy finally found the courage to speak.

"Who is the sunshine?" Tommy asked, "What does that mean?"

Wilbur looked sad, but he was still smiling. "It's a metaphor. *You* are my sunshine, Toms. It means you make me happy."

Tommy would like to say he didn't cry.

But that would be lying.

"Can I—" Tommy trembled. "—can I learn an instrument?"

Wilbur's smile widened. "Of course."

Wilbur led Tommy to a music room, and Tommy's eyes instantly landed on what Wilbur called a piano.

Wilbur motioned for Tommy to sit down on the piano bench, and Wilbur sat down next to him, showing Tommy how to place his fingers on the white keys.

"Now press down."

Tommy couldn't suppress his gasp of surprise as a ringing note filled the room.

Wilbur gave Tommy a fond smile. "That's the Middle C," he said.

Wilbur slowly began explaining scales to Tommy, and Tommy felt a strange thrill in his chest as his fingers pressed down on the keys, making sound higher and lower.

He wasn't sure how long he sat next to Wilbur, creating the beginnings of music with the piano. He played long enough that his fingers began feeling sore, and Wilbur had to force him to rest.

But his chest felt warm, and Wilbur looked proud, and Tommy couldn't regret it for the world.

Phil gave Tommy Tubbo and Ranboo's pieces of jewelry, telling Tommy what he was supposed to say to them when he gave them to them. Apparently Phil was going to give Schlatt's bracelet to him himself.

Tommy was worried he wasn't going to remember, but Phil told him that it was okay, that he only had to say the gist of it, and if he really didn't want to, he didn't have to.

So now Tommy was holding two boxes, standing in front of Tubbo and Ranboo.

Tommy took a deep breath.

"Tubbo." He opened the box and carefully picked up the bracelet. "I gift you this bracelet, so that anyone who sees it knows—" Tommy smiled as he slipped the bracelet onto Tubbo's wrist. "—that you're my best friend."

Tommy turned to Ranboo. "Ranboo." He opened the box, but he didn't pick up the earrings, instead handing the box straight to Ranboo. "I gift you these earrings, so that anyone who sees it knows that you're also my best friend."

Ranboo's eyes were sparkling unnaturally, and Tommy's heart thrummed with anxiety.

But then Ranboo smiled. "Thank you," he whispered.

Tubbo engulfed Tommy in a hug. "Thank you."

Tommy managed a weak smile. "You're welcome."

The day of the funeral was sooner than Tommy had expected it to be.

The day before it happened, Tommy sat next to Ranboo in the garden, silently staring at the flowers. Ranboo's earrings hung from his freshly pierced ears, and they glimmered in the sunlight.

"Did you have a funeral for your dad?" Tommy asked quietly.

Ranboo nodded, hugging himself. "I hope he liked it."

"What..." Tommy swallowed "What do you mean?"

"Well, he's watching over me, you know." Ranboo glanced up at the sky. "So, I hope he thought I did a good job."

Tommy frowned. But... but he was dead. How could Ranboo's dad be watching over him if he was dead?

"I don't get it."

"I believe," Ranboo said slowly, "that after people die, they go somewhere else, and they can watch over us from there."

"But they're dead."

"That's why it's somewhere else." Ranboo hummed. "Like another world."

Tommy swallowed, glancing up at the sky.

Sam had visited him in a dream, and... it had felt more real than any other dream Tommy had ever had. Tommy still remembered it clearly.

Could Ranboo be right?

It would make sense.

“You think my dad’s watching over me?” Tommy asked, his voice cracking.

Ranboo nodded. “I do.”

Tommy stared up at the sky. “I hope he’s not disappointed in me.”

“He’s not,” Ranboo said in a matter of fact tone, as if it were that easy.

And then the evening of the funeral was upon them.

A lot of people didn’t come. Instead, only Phil, Technoblade, Wilbur, Tubbo, Ranboo, Schlatt, Puffy, and Tommy attended.

Tommy liked it better that way.

It was evening, but Tommy could still see the blue sky overhead as they marched down to a different cemetery than the one Sam’s old grave was in. This cemetery was fancier.

This cemetery was meant for members of the royal family.

Tommy was wearing fancier clothes, but he decided not to wear his newly finished circlet.

He wanted to come as Sam’s funeral just as Tommy. Not Thomas. Not the Prince.

Just Tommy.

They all gathered around fancy but simple stone. From where he was standing, Tommy could see the engraved words.

*Sam*

*751 A.R. – 786 A.R.*

*Loving father, son, and friend.*

*Your courageous love flies higher than the stars above us.*

There was no body. But that didn’t matter.

Phil held an empty box, and Tommy stepped forward, his hands trembling as he pulled out a simple, golden chain with a shining green emerald hanging on it.

Tommy thought Sam would've liked it.

For a moment, he imagined Sam standing in front of him. Tommy imagined Sam taking the necklace with his eyes shining. He'd say he loved it. He'd put it on. And then he'd hug Tommy in thanks.

And then they would go inside, and Sam would laugh as Tommy told him about the prank Fundy had tried to pull on Niki the day before.

And then the moment ended, and Tommy stared at the empty box.

"I..." Tommy's voice trembled as he tried to remember what to say. "I gift you this necklace. So anyone who sees it—" Tommy's voice choked.

Because nobody would see it on Sam in life. Only people digging up what was underneath Sam's grave would ever see this necklace and what it meant.

"—so anyone who sees it knows that..." Tommy took a deep breath, and it became harder to speak past the tears. "You were my dad. I love you. I'm free."

Tommy stepped away.

Puffy said words of friendship and heroism that Tommy could barely hear; Phil gave his own thanks, asking for forgiveness for failing him somehow.

And then they placed the box in the hole in the ground and buried it.

Phil handed Tommy a small lantern, already lit up in the evening sun.

Phil had explained that lanterns were guides. That releasing one would be like guiding Sam to the afterlife.

"If you can see me—" Tommy took a deep breath. "—I hope you know how much you mean to me."

Tommy let go of the lantern, and they silently watched as it floated up into the air.

*I hope you're proud of me.*

*I hope you still love me.*

*I hope you're happy.*

Tommy's next words were in a whisper, only meant for him to hear.

"Thank you."



Sam <333333

Fyi a lot of the stuff written in here has been brainrotted on my discord, so special thanks to all the folks on there.

Thank you for reading, i hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments (no constructive crit unless i'm being offensive, typos are fine).

Comment or I'll kill Goose. Tommy will do it in the midst of a nightmare. /lh /j

# Chapter 32

## Chapter Summary

The seasons pass

Recovery continues

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced character death, trauma, ptsd, nightmares, discrimination, panic attacks, injury, grief, referenced kidnapping

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A loud burst of light filled Tommy's bedroom, and the crashing of thunder caused Tommy to scream.

Tommy ducked his head underneath the blankets of his nest, trying to breathe past the panic. His heart felt like it was flying really fast, and Tommy's wings were shaking so much that they almost hurt.

Another crash of thunder, and Tommy bit back another shriek.

He wasn't weak. He wasn't a coward. He wasn't a sniveling child who couldn't stomach even the easiest of things, *Thomas*.

Tommy spun around on his back, half-expecting to see his father's killer towering over him, ready to take him away.

But nobody was there. The room was empty, and Tommy was left alone with the flashing of lightning and downpour of rain, and crashing of thunder.

Goose clucked concernedly next to him, rubbing her feathered head against Tommy's cheek, and Tommy hugged her close.

This time, the thunder and the lightning came at the exact same time, and Tommy couldn't stop the terrified shriek that escaped from his lips, as well as his full-body flinch that nearly caused him to topple backwards into his nest.

Why did it have to be so loud? Why did it have to sound like the world was ending?

Tommy remembered the first time he had seen a thunderstorm, he genuinely thought the world was coming to an end. Someone told him that, no, it was just a weather pattern, and Tommy had shuddered at the thought of having to listen to that more than once.

And now Tommy was here, trying not to act like a child as he buried his face into Goose's feathers.

Maybe Tommy should just go to the library and see if Techno was awake. He could start working on his stuffed animal for Ranboo. He had already finished Tubbo's, but he wanted to give them to both Ranboo and Tubbo at the same time.

Yeah, Tommy would just go to the library. Sewing might make him forget about the—

Another crash of thunder.

Tommy jumped to his feet and scrambled out of his room without another word, frantic to get to Technoblade and lean against him and—

Tommy reached the library, but the door wasn't cracked and there was no light coming from it.

Tommy's heart sunk.

Was Technoblade asleep? Tommy hadn't seen it happen yet, but he supposed it had to happen eventually. Maybe Technoblade just really liked thunder storms. Tommy couldn't even begin to imagine why, however. They were terrifying. They sounded like the world was coming to the end.

And what if the lightning meant something really bad was going to happen? What if it burned the palace? What if it resurrected his father's killer? What if Tommy was going to die and nobody was going to care?

Tommy was panicking. He couldn't breathe. Tommy should breathe, but every time he tried it just felt more and more difficult.

Goose nuzzled Tommy, and Tommy's breathing relaxed ever so slightly.

Tommy didn't want to go back to his bedroom. Tommy didn't want to go back to being alone in the dark while the lightning flashed and the thunder crashed and the world burned around him.

Tommy hurried back to the hallway with all the bedrooms, and he frantically tried to find the one where Tubbo slept.

HE was in a shaking frenzy, and Tommy quickly opened the door to Tubbo's bedroom to find —

Oh.

This wasn't Tubbo's bedroom.

Wilbur sat up from his nest, squinting at Tommy with a weird expression on his face.

“Tommy?” he asked, his voice sounding groggy, “What’s wrong, baby?”

Tommy was shaking. “Nothing,” he whispered, reaching to close the door again, “I’m sorry for bothering you—”

“I’m not upset.” Wilbur sounded frantic. “Baby, I’m not upset.”

Another crash of thunder, and Tommy flinched, letting out a shriek that sounded more like a peep.

“Oh.” Wilbur’s face was soft. “You’re afraid of the storm?”

Tommy wanted to shake his head, but that would be lying, and lying meant getting hurt.

“I’m sorry.” Tommy felt like he wanted to cry. “I’m being weak, it’s just a storm, I don’t want to bother you—”

“I used to be afraid of thunderstorms,” Wilbur said, “You’re not bothering me.”

Tommy hesitated. “Can I... can I sleep with you tonight?”

Wilbur might get upset, but at least Tommy could know and learn from that.

“Of course.” Because Wilbur never got mad. Wilbur shuffled to the side, making more room in his nest.

At the sound of more thunder, Tommy sprinted across the room and sat by Wilbur’s side, grabbing tightly to Wilbur’s shirt. He was being clingy, and Dream wouldn’t like this at all, but Wilbur wasn’t mad by it.

Goose placed herself in Tommy’s lap.

“Would you like me to play guitar?” Wilbur asked softly, “Or do you just want to sleep?”

Tommy wasn’t sure he would be able to sleep with the rain this loud, and Wilbur played guitar really well.

“Guitar please.”

Wilbur reached over the side of his nest and picked up his guitar, and Tommy listened tiredly as he started plucking a melody.

The thunder still made Tommy shake, but it was better with Wilbur. Tommy actually felt safe.

“My room is dark,” Tommy whispered to Wilbur as he continued playing the guitar.

Wilbur paused. “At night, you mean?”

Tommy nodded.

“Would you like something to make it less dark?” Wilbur didn’t look upset as he turned to Tommy, “I’m sure Eret can do something for you.”

Tommy shrugged. “I don’t want to be a burden.”

“It wouldn’t be a burden,” Wilbur assured him, “Besides, Eret likes making things glow.”

The next evening, Eret, Fundy, Niki, and Wilbur led Tommy to his bedroom with excited looks on their faces. Tommy wasn’t sure what could be so exciting about a single glowing object.

He said as much, preparing for a reprimand, but they only laughed.

“Alright,” Wilbur said, “Time for the big reveal.” He gave Tommy a hopeful look. “Can I cover your eyes?”

Tommy twisted his fingers together. “Um…”

“I’m going to take that as a no,” Wilbur said seriously, “That’s alright. You can close your eyes instead.”

Tommy nodded. He could do that. He closed his eyes and focused on the sound of Wilbur’s voice.

“Alright, I’m opening the door, and it’s just me that’s touching your shoulder, Tommy—” Tommy flinched anyway. “—and just step forward into the bedroom.”

Tommy stepped forward, Wilbur’s hand guiding him as he presumably stepped deeper into the bedroom.

“Alright,” Wilbur said, “You can open your eyes.”

Tommy opened his eyes, and he gasped.

His entire *ceiling* was glowing.

Small glowing dots filled the dark ceiling, a gradient from purple, to blue, to white. They looked like the stars outside, except these stars were inside, filling his room with light.

Tommy wasn’t sure how long he stood there, staring up at his now starry ceiling.

“Do you like it?” Eret asked, sounding nervous.

Tommy couldn’t imagine anyone *not* liking it.

“I love it,” he whispered, a wide smile growing on his face, “Thank you.”

Eret grinned. “I’m glad.”

Tommy started lessons again. Technoblade taught Tommy about classic literature, and Wilbur taught Tommy history. A nice man taught Tommy science and math, and Fundy taught them languages.

“I’m not originally from the Antarctic Empire, you know,” he said, “I come from L’manberg. It’s mostly on the water. We speak a completely different language down there.”

Tommy hadn’t realized there were different languages.

They didn’t hit Tommy when he didn’t get something right in time. They didn’t tell him he was stupid.

As a matter of fact, for some reason, they all kept praising Tommy, telling him he was really smart, which... wasn’t true.

“You’re a really fast learner,” Fundy praised, “It took me way longer to learn Antarctician.”

“You’re just a good teacher,” Tommy tried to protest, but Fundy wouldn’t hear it.

The summer was quickly fading away to autumn, and the air outside got colder.

Tommy didn’t mind. He actually preferred the crisp breeze in comparison to the boiling sun.

Sam had described what happened when leaves fell off the trees. He had said that they changed from their usual green color to reds, oranges, yellows, and browns, and then they fell to the ground and made a mess.

But Sam’s words had completely failed to describe how *beautiful* it was.

The leaves weren’t just changing colors. It almost looked like the trees were aflame with how bright and vibrant they were. Even as they fell off the trees, their bright colors coated the ground in a way that made Tommy almost sad that they had to rake them up.

But only almost. The leaves covered up their plants and the grass, and Tubbo and Ranboo both agreed that if they just let the leaves sit, they’d stop the plants from growing as they should.

So Tommy helped Ponk, Ranboo, and Tubbo rake the leaves into one massive pile right next to a big tree in the center of one of the gardens. When they were done, the pile was taller than even Ranboo.

Ranboo and Tubbo stared at the pile like it was the most beautiful thing in the world.

“Can we jump in it?” Tubbo whispered.

Ponk glanced at the wheelbarrow that they were supposed to be putting the leaves on.

“You’ll have to clean up when you’re done,” they warned.

“Is that a yes?” Ranboo asked.

Ponk sighed. “Yes, it’s a yes.”

Tubbo cheered, and suddenly he was flying in the air, shooting himself like an arrow through the side of the leaf pile. The once tall leaf pile instantly shrunk in size, and leaves flew through the air in a burst of color.

Tubbo’s hair and wings were now full of leaves, but he was grinning widely.

Ranboo picked up the rake, and Tommy quickly helped him make the leaf pile correct again.

Tommy vaguely remembered Sam mentioning something about jumping into piles of leaves, and it did look like fun, but it made quite a bit of a mess.

“Is it my turn?” Ranboo asked.

Tubbo nodded, already taking the leaves out of his wings.

Ranboo flew up to the top of the leaf pile, hovering over it so that the tops of his toes touched the top of the pile.

And then he dropped.

Tommy gasped as he fell straight into the pile and became completely covered by the leaves.

Then, the leaf pile completely collapsed on itself as Ranboo stepped out of the side, looking like he was made more up of leaves than anything else.

They quickly re-did the pile, and Tubbo and Ranboo turned to Tommy.

“Your turn!” Tubbo cheered. Tubbo’s dog barked in agreement.

Tommy glanced at the leaf pile apprehensively.

“I can’t fly, though,” he said, futilely stretching out his wings.

After months of misuse and years of not enough practice, Tommy’s muscles had become weak. Phil had helped Tommy stretch them and go through small exercises to rebuild their strength, but Tommy wasn’t able to fly just yet.

He hoped he could soon.

“You don’t have to fly,” Tubbo said, “You can just run and jump.”

Goose marched up to Tommy and placed a leaf at his feet, clucking in what almost sounded like agreement to Tubbo’s statement.

Tommy took a deep breath. It *did* look like a lot of fun.

“Okay.”

Tommy stepped a little further away from the leaf pile before breaking into a run. He tucked his wings behind himself and leapt into the pile.

The leaves crunched underneath him as he fell into the pile, and Tommy's knees hit the hard, grassy ground with a thump.

He breathed heavily, a large grin on his face.

That was amazing.

He quickly pulled himself out of the pile, and they all continued taking turns leaping into the leaf pile in different ways. At one point, Tubbo took a bunch of leaves and flew above Tommy and Ranboo, dropping the leaves on top of them like it was rain.

Still, a small part of Tommy ached to be able to do the stunts that Ranboo and Tubbo were doing, so on his fourth turn with the leaf pile, he quickly climbed the tree the pile was resting next to.

"I'm going to jump in!" he explained when Ranboo confusedly asked what he was doing.

Both kids cheered Tommy on, and Tommy climbed onto one of the lower branches of the tree, staring down at the pile.

It was kind of scary from up here.

But Tommy took a deep breath and leapt.

At first, Tommy felt an exhilarating swooping sensation in his stomach as he dropped downward. His feet met the leaves, and he let out an excited cheer.

Then his foot hit the grass, his ankle twisted unpleasantly, and Tommy's excited cheer became a pained scream as he landed.

"Tommy!" both Tubbo and Ranboo exclaimed, and they quickly rushed over to him to see what was wrong.

Tommy felt like he wanted to throw up. His entire body felt coated with a pale and clammy sweat.

His ankle hurt like it was on fire.

"Are you alright?" Tubbo asked.

"I'm fine," Tommy whispered. Tears were filling his eyes for some stupid reason, which was bad. He was being *weak*. "I'll be fine."

"You don't look fine," Ranboo said, "Should we get someone?"

Tommy shook his head, forcing himself back to his feet. It hurt so much that Tommy had to bite the inside of his cheek so badly that he could taste blood or stop himself from screaming.



“You don’t look fine,” Tubbo said reproachfully, “Sit back down.”

“I’m fine—” Tommy’s voice cracked as he tried to take a single step forward.

“You’re crying.” Ranboo pointed to Tommy’s face, and Tommy felt horrible dread crash over him.

He was weak. He was supposed to be fine. He was supposed to be able to do this. Why couldn’t he do this one thing?

“Tommy please sit down,” Tubbo looked genuinely worried now, and Tommy hated himself for it, but he didn’t sit down. Even though his ankle felt like it was going to cave in on itself, and that Tommy was going to die, he didn’t sit down.

He wasn’t weak.

Ranboo was already sprinting away, calling for help. Tubbo was pleading with Tommy, trying to grab him by the shoulders and force him to the ground.

Tommy flinched away. “I’m fine, Tubbo!” Tommy snapped.

“You’re not fine!” Tubbo’s voice cracked. “Sit down, you’re going to make it worse!”

Something in Tubbo’s tone caused Tommy to sit down instantly. His entire world felt like it was swaying from side to side, and Tommy’s ears began ringing.

Tommy wasn’t sure if it was because of Tubbo yelling at him, or the pain, or a mixture of the two.

“I’m sorry,” Tubbo said as Tommy tried his best to stop himself from crying anymore than he already had, “I shouldn’t have yelled.”

“I shouldn’t have yelled,” Tommy protested. He tried to keep his voice from sounding too whiney. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright.”

Ranboo was sprinting back into the courtyard, Technoblade behind him.

Tommy couldn’t read the expression on Technoblade’s face, but he knew it must’ve been bad. Tommy really must’ve screwed up now.

He was showing too much weakness. Technoblade was probably going to punish him.

“Tommy!” Technoblade called out as he skidded to a halt in front of Tommy, “Where is it?”

“Where is what?” Tommy asked, struggling to focus.

“The injury, where’s the injury?”

If Tommy didn’t know better, he’d almost say that Technoblade sounded *scared*.

Tommy and Tubbo both pointed to Tommy's ankle, and Technoblade bent down in front of it.

"It's broken," he said almost instantly. Tommy cringed.

"I'm fine."

Technoblade gave Tommy a look that very clearly conveyed that Tommy should give up insisting he was fine.

Tommy hoped the punishment wasn't going to be too bad.

"Here's what's going to happen," Technoblade said, "I'm going to reset this ankle. Then you're going to take one of Phil's feathers and it'll be as good as new. Got it?"

Tommy took a deep breath and nodded. He could do this.

Goose sat down in his lap.

"Somebody take his hand," Technoblade instructed, "This isn't going to be pleasant."

Tubbo and Ranboo both took each of his hands, and Tommy held his breath.

"Alright on a count of three. One—"

Blistering pain filled Tommy's ankle as he set it into place, light filled Tommy's vision, and he screamed.

He was being punished, his father's killer was standing over him and telling him he should never be weak again, he was being punished—

Someone was pressing a feather into Tommy's hand, and Tommy quickly crushed it.

Overwhelming relief filled Tommy's ankle, and Tommy forced away the image of Dream hovering over him out of his mind. He wasn't there. He wasn't there. Tommy was outside. He could see the sky.

Tommy was still shaking, and a sheen of sweat was still all over his body. Tommy vaguely wondered if he was going to be sick.

Ranboo and Tubbo were hugging him, and Tommy hugged them back, trying to press back even more tears that would only make his punishment worse.

"I'm sorry," he whispered to Technoblade, "I shouldn't have been weak, I shouldn't have—"

Technoblade rested a hand on Tommy's head. "Next time you get injured, please don't make it worse," he said, "I don't care if you think it looks weak. I don't want you to hurt yourself more."

Oh. So, Tommy had screwed up, just not in the way he thought.

"I'm sorry."

“It’s alright.” Technoblade sighed. “And I’m not punishing you either.”

Tommy’s chest felt heavy for some reason, and he nodded.

The leaves were still really fun.

Technoblade gave Tommy his own sewing kit and supplies, as well as some patterns Tommy can use.

“If you don’t see me in the library, you can still work on stuff on your own,” Technoblade said, “And you don’t have to only do it at night either.”

Tommy still usually did his sewing at night, although he worked on it sometimes during the day.

So far, Tommy had successfully created a stuffed ladybug for Tubbo and a stuffed rabbit for Ranboo.

Tonight, Tommy sat alone in his bedroom, the glowing stars making him feel safer as he lit a few candles and started sewing together a bird.

He used dark green fabric and put extra care and precision in all of his stitches. Goose occasionally would look at his work and give a satisfied cluck.

When Tommy was done, he smiled at the at the stuffed bird he had created and placed him carefully next to Henry.

The next morning, Tommy walked down to the royal graveyard. He sat down in front of Sam’s grave.

He placed the stuffed green bird in front of it.

“I made this for you,” Tommy whispered, “I hope you like it.”

Tommy closed his eyes and imagined Sam saying he loved it. He imagined him hugging Tommy like Wilbur did.

“I love you.”

Tommy stood up and left the stuffed bird at the grave. It was Sam’s, after all.

As Tommy returned from the graveyard, he heard one of the guards muttering under his breath.

“Must enjoy death with those wings of yours, huh?”

Tommy forced himself to ignore it. He was right to be wary of his wings, after all—

The guard let out a shout of pain, and Tommy spun around to see Goose aggressively pecking at his ankles. Anxiety spiked through Tommy's chest, and he tried his best to tug the angry chicken away from the guard.

Goose only continued to squawk aggressively, however, and eventually, another guard came over to the commotion.

"What the hell's going on?" she demanded.

Tommy shrunk away, still trying to wrestle with Goose.

"His feral chicken attacked me," the guard spat.

The other guard glanced over at the chicken with a grim smile on her face. "Oh yes, I'm sure the chicken that I have seen do no harm to anyone multiple times just randomly decided you were the one."

Goose squawked loudly.

"It's alright," Tommy tried to say quietly, "He was just saying that me and graveyards, because of my wings—"

"I'm afraid I'm going to have to take you to the higher-ups," the nice guard said, grabbing the rude guard by the arm, "Antagonizing the prince is at *least* going to get you fired, and King Philza made it very clear that discriminating against black-borns wasn't going to be tolerated."

Tommy winced at the word.

*Black-born.*

He knew the nice guard meant well. She was *helping* him after all, but...

Tommy knew he was black-born. He knew he was evil, but Ranboo said they weren't. Everyone said that it didn't matter if Tommy had black wings, that it didn't make him inherently evil.

And Tommy thought... Tommy thought that he might actually believe them.

But nobody ever said white-born, or gray-born, or green-born, or red-born.

It was only ever *black-born*.

Why did Tommy have to be black-born? Why couldn't Tommy just be Tommy?

He asked Ranboo about it later.

"I agree," Ranboo said quietly, "It's not fair that we can't just 'have black wings' but instead everyone looks at us and calls us 'black-born.' It makes us seem like some sort of monster."

*“You’re a black-born, a monster,”* his father’s killer’s voice whispered in Tommy’s ear, *“Only meant to kill.”*

“I’m not a monster,” Tommy blurted out. He glanced at Ranboo.

“We’re not monsters,” Ranboo agreed, squeezing Tommy’s hand.

They agreed to bring it up at dinner.

Ranboo was the one who cleared his throat.

“Um,” Ranboo began, “Tommy and I... would like to talk about something that makes us uncomfortable.”

Tommy froze, gaging for everyone’s reactions.

Everyone was staring attentively at Tommy and Ranboo. Ranboo glanced in Tommy’s direction, and unspoken question in his eyes.

Tommy took a deep breath. He could do this.

“The word black-born,” Tommy said quietly, staring at his plate, “It’s... rude.”

“It’s demonizing,” Ranboo added, “And, um, we don’t appreciate that calling people with black wings black-borns is normal when... when nobody says ‘gold-born’ or anything like that.”

The expressions of shocked horror around the table made Tommy’s heart sink, and an apology was already on his lips when—

“You’re right,” Wilbur whispered, his voice shaking, “Oh my prime, you’re right.”

Phil looked equally horror struck. “I never thought about it before,” he whispered, like he had committed some terrible crime.

And suddenly everyone was apologizing to Tommy and Ranboo repeatedly, looking like they had just learned they were the cause of their own worst nightmare.

“I’ll have textbooks remove the word instantly,” Phil said, looking like his mind was going a mile-per-minute, “I’ll warn the staff that if they’re caught saying it they’ll get a warning and then they’re fired. I’ll find a way to deter the public from saying it.”

Ranboo was beaming, and Tommy could only sit there in shock.

They were listening.

Phil was trying to help.

Tommy’s eyes burned, and he managed a small smile.

Tommy woke up in the morning with the image of Sam cradling him trapped in his mind.

Tommy went to the piano and played a sad tune, allowing his fingers to make up the notes as he went along.

When he was done, the room rang in silence.

His chest felt slightly lighter.

It was on a crisp autumn afternoon that Tommy stood on top of an outcropping in the courtyard. Wilbur stood next to him.

Technoblade and Phil stood below them, and Schlatt was watching nearby, looking ready to jump if anything went wrong.

“Alright,” Phil said comfortingly, “If anything happens, one of us will catch you, alright?”

Tommy took a deep breath and nodded. They would catch him. They would catch him.

“Alright, Wilbur?” Technoblade confirmed.

Wilbur fidgeted with his prosthetic. “Okay! But if you drop me immediately it isn’t a very nice sentiment.”

Drop him?

“We won’t drop you,” Phil said sternly.

He smiled at Tommy. “Are you ready?”

Tommy nodded. He could do this. He had done this before. If he could fly for his father’s killer, then Tommy sure as hell could fly for a family that properly cared for him.

At least, that’s what Tommy’s new therapist told him to tell himself.

It did feel empowering, in a strange way.

“Alright,” Phil said, “Whenever you’re ready.”

Tommy imagined Sam smiling at him, encouraging him to go. Tommy imagined the wind in his wings as he flew through the air. Tommy imagined the exhilaration.

And Tommy jumped.

There was a swooping sensation in Tommy’s stomach, and for a terrifying moment, Tommy thought he was going to *fall, fall, fall*.

But then Tommy spread his wings wide, and Tommy's descent slowed.

A feeling of euphoria rushing through Tommy, he pushed his wings down against the air.

And Tommy shot straight upwards.

Tommy's heart was racing as he flew higher into the blue sky. He was doing it. He was actually *flying*.

Tommy let out an excited cheer, and he flew downwards, laughing at the feeling of the wind in his hair.

He spread his feathers in his landing and landed right in front of Technoblade and Phil with a loud thump.

Breathing heavily, he looked up at them hopefully, trying to push back his vibrating excitement.

"Was that good?" he asked breathlessly.

*"It was sloppy,"* Dream's voice whispered in his ear, *"And the shouting was obnoxious."*

*Shut up,* Tommy said inside his head, because that's what his therapist suggested. *You're dead.*

"It was wonderful," Phil whispered.

Technoblade gave Tommy a nod. "Good job."

Schlatt smiled. "Great flying, kid."

Tommy allowed his thrilled grin to spread across his face, tugging his cheeks upward in a way that probably should hurt his face but only made him want to smile wider.

"Alright, Wilbur!" Phil called out, "Your turn!"

Tommy held his breath as he watched Wilbur run and jump off of the outcropping. Was he going to fall? Was he going to die?

But Wilbur stretched his prosthetic wing out, and his other wing matched the movement, and Wilbur didn't plummet to his death.

Instead, Wilbur glided forward. Adjusting his wing and prosthetic, Wilbur managed to glide in large looping circles until landing down in front of the family.

A large grin was on his face as well, and he instantly hugged Phil.

"I did it," he whispered.

Phil hugged him close. "I'm so proud of you." His eyes landed on Tommy. "I'm proud of you too."

Tommy's chest felt warm.

Wilbur woke up with a sharp scream.

*“Are you scared, little princeling—”* Dream's voice echoed in his ears over and over again, *are you scared, are you scared, are you scared—*

Wilbur wasn't scared. He was absolutely terrified.

The phantom pain from his still missing wing ached horribly, and Wilbur grunted in pain as he hastily put on his prosthetic.

He couldn't stay alone in his bedroom, not with Dream's words echoing over and over and over.

Wilbur took a deep breath. He was in the castle. Tommy was safe. Everyone was safe. Wilbur was safe.

That didn't stop Wilbur from all but sprinting to Phil's bedroom, knocking on the door semi-frantically.

To Phil's credit, he was up and opening the door within thirty-seconds. His expression was one of panic, but he softened when he saw Wilbur standing in front of him.

Wilbur was trembling.

“Oh, Wil,” Phil whispered, “Are you alright?”

“I can't—” Wilbur's voice choked off. “Can I sleep with you tonight?”

Phil nodded, and Wilbur followed him into his nest.

Wilbur let out a shuddering breath. “I don't... I don't mean to bother you,” he whispered.

“You're not bothering me,” Phil said firmly, “I'm glad you came, alright?” There was a pause. “Can I hug you?”

Wilbur hugged himself. “Don't touch my wings?”

Phil nodded. “Alright, baby.”

Wilbur slowly wrapped his arms around Phil, and Phil returned the motion. His embrace was steady and firm, and Wilbur found himself slowly collapsing under the pressure as his tears became sobs and his sobs became wails.

“I should be better than this—”

“We've talked about this Wilbur,” Phil said, “You've done nothing wrong. I'm so glad you came to me instead of trying to shoulder this on your own.”



“Yeah?” Wilbur sniffed.

The door creaked open suddenly, and Wilbur spun around to see Tommy standing awkwardly in the doorway. His face was pale.

“Oh,” he whispered, already stepping away, “I can leave, I’m sorry—”

“Stay.” Wilbur sniffed. “You don’t have to leave.”

Tommy gave Phil a hopeful look. “Really?”

Phil nodded. “Of course, you can stay.”

Tommy slowly entered the room, and Phil made room for Tommy on the other side of the nest. Tommy slowly crawled inside, relaxing against Phil.

“Nightmare?” Phil asked gently.

Tommy only nodded.

“I’m tired,” he whispered.

“Go to sleep, baby.” Phil rubbed Tommy’s back. “We’ll be there when you wake.”

Tommy hummed, very clearly already half-asleep. “M’kay, Sam.”

Phil and Wilbur froze, but Tommy was already asleep.

Phil looked like he was about to cry, his adam’s apple bobbing up and down. “He called me Sam,” he whispered.

Wilbur could hardly believe it himself.

Technoblade eventually came in, his eyes blown wide in a panic. Knowing Technoblade, he’d probably been checking Wilbur and Tommy’s bedrooms, and finding they weren’t there, he started panicking.

“We’re safe,” Phil whispered, “Tommy’s asleep.”

Technoblade’s shoulders relaxed. “Alright, then.”

“Sleep with us?” Wilbur asked.

Technoblade sighed, and he crawled into the nest.

They were a family, after all.

Later, after Tommy woke up, he made no indication he remembered calling Phil Sam.

They decided not to bring it up.

Tommy woke up one morning with his scars aching.

Tommy rubbed his hand against one on his forearm, scowling at it. Why did it have to hurt? Wasn't it bad enough that it showed how broken he was?

Nobody called him broken before, but Tommy looked in the mirror. He could see that other people didn't have as many blemishes on their skin as Tommy did. He could see that, in a way, Tommy's scars looked like cracked vases and crumbled up pieces of paper.

His therapist said that his scars showed how strong he was to survive the horrible things Tommy went through, but on days like these, Tommy struggled to believe it.

Why did his stupid scars have to hurt so much today anyway?

And why was the sun shining so brightly through his windows?

Tommy glanced outside, and for a moment, he thought he was still dreaming.

Because everything was *white*.

The balcony was white. The sky was a white-ish color. The city was coated white.

And then there was the sound of knocking on Tommy's door.

"Tommy! Tommy! It's snow!" Tubbo's voice said excitedly from outside.

Oh. *Oh*.

*This* was snow.

Sam had failed to mention how white it made everything look.

Tommy quickly got to his feet, ignoring the aching in his scars, and he shoved the door open.

Tubbo was already wearing multiple layers of sweaters, a scarf, gloves, and a hat.

"Get dressed!" he said, his wings puffed up in excitement, "I want to show you how to make a snowman!"

Tommy wasn't entirely sure *how* he was supposed to get dressed for snow if it required as many things as Tubbo had.

"I don't—I don't—"

Tubbo's eyes widened. "Oh, okay, do you want my dad to write a list for you?"

Tommy bit the inside of his cheek before nodding.

Tubbo dashed down the hall, and it barely felt like two minutes later before he was dashing back down again, holding a slip of paper in his hands.

“Here you go!”

Tommy took the sheet of paper and quickly scanned over its contents.

*-thick pants*

*-two thick shirts*

*-a cloak*

*-a scarf*

*-a hat preferably*

*-gloves*

*-thick socks*

*-boots*

“That’s a lot of clothing,” Tommy observed.

“Dad says that you get sick if you’re out in the cold for too long,” Tubbo said, “The snow is really cold.”

Tommy could feel some of its chill even in here, so he nodded.

It took a little while for Tommy to find all the clothes he needed, and when he was done, he found it a lot harder to walk than before.

However, the warm layers took some of the aching away from his scars, so Tommy thought it was pretty worth it.

Tommy met up with Tubbo, Ranboo, and Wilbur and his friends outside. The snow crunched underneath his feet in a way different from the leaves, and the chill bit at his cheeks.

Wilbur looked even more covered up in layers than Tommy did.

“Where’s Techno?” Tommy asked.

Wilbur sighed. “Techno does not see the enjoyment in playing in the snow on the first snow day in winter since it snows every other day of winter as well.”

A ball of snow hit Wilbur in the back of his head, and Wilbur spun around with an indignant shout.

Ranboo pointed at the person who threw the snowball at Wilbur. "Techno's right there."

"I thought you were staying inside!" Wilbur shouted, "You know, like you do every other year!"

Techno shrugged as he approached. "Those years were different."

"What was different about them?" Tommy asked, hugging himself from the cold. His breath formed a small cloud, and Tommy stared at it with vague fascination. He still wasn't used to that.

Techno looked away. "I was in the mood," he said, "I heard something about a snowman?"

Tubbo instantly began directing everyone to roll up balls of snow. Wilbur had to help as the ball got bigger and bigger, and Technoblade was the one who rolled the other balls on top of each other.

Tommy stared at the three balls of snow stacked on top of each other. He wasn't sure how they were supposed to resemble a man.

Ranboo came running toward them. "I have some sticks!"

Goose, wearing a sock that Tommy had quickly cut in half for a hat, came marching toward Tommy with two pebbles.

"Goose gave me two pebbles," Tommy informed the group, not entirely sure what to do with them.

"Oh, Goose, you little angel!" Wilbur praised. He gestured for Tommy to come in front of the snowman with him. "Alright." Wilbur poked two small holes into the snow on the top sphere. "You just need to place each pebble into the hole. They'll be the eyes."

Tommy stood on his tip toes to place the pebbles where Wilbur instructed them to be placed.

They did sort of look like eyes, although the rest of the face was significantly lacking.

Ranboo stuck two long sticks into the sides of the snowman, and Tommy understood that those must be the hands.

"Alright," Tubbo said, "I think there's some fallen pine branches we can use for the wings."

Technoblade brought a carrot, of which they stuck into the snowman's face for a nose. Niki placed some pebbles on the face for a mouth, and Eret gave the snowman his scarf.

Fundy shivered, decked out in even more layers than Wilbur was. "How can you give up your scarf?"

“I didn’t grow up on the coast,” Eret replied simply.

Tubbo placed two large pine branches with dark green pine needles on the back of the snowman.

Sam’s wings were the same color as those pine needles.

Stepping back from their handiwork, Tommy could begin to understand how their creation might be considered a snowman.

They then moved onto what Tubbo called a snowball fight, which involved a lot of making balls with snow, throwing said balls, and flying around everywhere so that they could hit people on top of the head with the snowballs.

When they were done, Tommy felt soaked to the bone, and his scars ached more than he would’ve liked as they marched back to the palace.

Schlatt was waiting for them at the entrance.

“Everybody go to your rooms and change into some dry clothes,” he instructed, “Nobody’s getting hypothermia on my watch.”

Wilbur and Technoblade shuddered for some reason.

Tommy went back to his bedroom and changed into some more warm clothes. He spotted an oversized yellow sweater that he was pretty sure belonged to Wilbur in the drawer. One of the servants must’ve gotten mixed up.

Tommy hesitated. Should he?

Taking a deep breath, Tommy shoved the oversized sweater over his head. It was warm. And soft.

Now in dry clothes and feeling significantly better, Tommy went to the living area. Tubbo, Ranboo, and Technoblade were already waiting by a fire, and Tommy quickly sat down in between Tubbo and Ranboo, scratching both Tubbo and Ranboo’s pets behind the ears.

Wilbur came lumbering down moments later, and Phil came into the room with a tray of mugs.

He started passing them around, and Tommy took his own mug, warm against his palms. He glanced down in the steam to see a rich brown liquid.

“Hot chocolate,” Phil said, his eyes filled with pained understanding.

Tommy swallowed back a lump in his throat, and he took a sip.

It tasted good.

Sam would’ve liked it.

When Tommy finished his mug, he looked up at Phil, anxiously petting Goose's feathers.

"Can I get one more?"

Tommy took the mug down to the cemetery.

Where the bird Tommy made was once sitting, a gilded box sat instead. Phil had given Tommy the key, telling him it was to keep the things that he left at Sam's grave safe.

The key was on a chain around Tommy's neck, but Tommy didn't bother unlocking the box.

Instead, Tommy placed the mug of hot chocolate on top of the box.

"It's cold outside," Tommy said quietly, "I thought you might like the hot chocolate."

He imagined Sam saying thank you as he took a sip.

"You're welcome."

One day, when Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo were bored of the cold snow, they all gathered around a book of sign language in the library. They spent hours learning different signs and how to put them together into coherent sentences.

Tommy committed the sign for '*I love you*' to memory.

Saying the words out loud for everyone to hear was terrifying, but somehow, Tommy found it infinitely easier to sign it to Wilbur and make it look like a finger twitch. He did it for Technoblade when he offered his help. When Phil complimented or hugged him, Tommy expressed his love in a language that Phil would hopefully never understand.

He did love them.

But Tommy wasn't sure he was ready for them to know it yet.

The winter solstice crept up on Tommy when he wasn't paying attention.

To be fair, Tommy didn't know much about holidays. They had had a harvest festival near the end of fall, and Tommy had made a public appearance as the long-lost prince, receiving mixed reviews from the public.

Phil told Tommy that he wasn't obligated to publicly appear at any other festivals if anything happening were to be triggering in any way.

A small part of Tommy wanted to hide away from everyone, to pretend that he wasn't cursed with wings that could kill, to pretend that he wasn't a murderer.

But... Tommy was a prince, according to Philza. Should he really hide from his own people because they couldn't handle the way Tommy was born?

Tommy went to the winter solstice festival, wearing his circlet and trying to stand as tall as Wilbur and Technoblade did. Goose attacked anyone who tried to say something or do something to Tommy, and the offender had to deal with either Phil, Wilbur, or Technoblade afterwards.

A little girl with black wings came toddling up to Tommy at one point, and she hugged his legs.

"You're my hero!" she exclaimed.

Tommy had known himself as many things. Murderer, cursed, victim, friend, brother, son.

But a hero?

"Really?" Tommy asked.

The little girl nodded.

"That—" Tommy swallowed down a lump in his throat. "Thank you."

Tommy hadn't kept a journal before that moment, but he wanted to treasure that memory forever, so he quickly asked Tubbo he had a journal. Tubbo was happy to provide, and Tommy quickly wrote the memory down with his most careful handwriting.

Tommy's therapist had liked the idea of journaling, suggesting that Tommy journal whenever his emotions got too intense, or whenever he wanted to remember something specific.

Tommy started journaling everything he could remember about Sam after that conversation.

Public appearances weren't Tommy's only troubles when it came to the winter solstice holiday, however.

Everyone gave each other *gifts* on this holiday.

And Tommy was at a loss as to what to give everyone. What if Tommy's gift wasn't good enough? What if they didn't like them?

"We'll love anything you make," Phil had assured him, "It's the thought that counts."

*I love you*, Tommy signed quickly with his fingers.

Nevertheless, Tommy only felt somewhat reassured, and he still dedicated himself to making the best gifts possible.

Once, Tommy's therapist told him that sewing was a good coping mechanism, and that finding other coping mechanisms like that would be a great way to ground himself whenever he had a nightmare or was beginning to think too much about his abuser.

Tommy liked the idea of doing more things like sewing, and he cautiously went up to Technoblade to ask if he had anything else he knew how to do.

Technoblade, unfortunately, shook his head.

“I know Eret does embroidery,” he said, “You could talk to them about that. Something tells me you’d be good at it.”

Eret had been more than happy to teach Tommy how to embroider. Somehow, it was both very similar and very different to sewing.

But there was something almost magical with starting with a white cloth and using different color threads to create a picture.

“Do you just have to use a white cloth?” Tommy asked.

Eret shook her head. “You can do it on any fabric. If you only have a needle and thread, you can find any clothing article and start embroidering on it.”

Tommy spent his evenings and sleepless nights sewing scarves and embroidering his best designs in them. Tommy had no idea if they were good enough, but he hoped that the others would like them.

The morning of the winter solstice arrived, and Tommy brought his carefully wrapped gifts downstairs. The others were already waiting for him.

“Sorry for being late,” he said, feeling his face go red.

“Don’t worry,” Wilbur said, even though Tubbo looked like he was vibrating in excitement, “Place your gifts down and we can start exchanging them.”

Tommy did so, and they all started taking turns giving each other their gifts.

When Phil handed Tommy his gift, Tommy blinked in surprise. “I get one too?”

Tommy wasn’t sure *why* he was surprised. He logically knew that he was getting gifts, and yet...

Tommy hadn’t done this sort of thing before.

Phil looked a little heartbroken, and Tommy tried to push away the guilt. According to both Phil and Tommy’s therapist, Phil was sad for him, not mad at him.

“You get one too,” Phil confirmed.

Tommy opened it, and inside sat the most beautiful embroidery set that Tommy had ever seen.

“Thank you,” Tommy whispered in awe.



Phil smiled. "It belonged to your mother."

Questions sat on the tip of Tommy's tongue, but he pressed them down. He'd ask about his mother another time.

When they got to Tommy's presents, everybody exclaimed over them, saying they loved them. They all put their scarves on right away, and Tommy felt his cheeks go warm.

Niki had baked treats, and Phil had kissed the top of Tommy's head.

"Your return has been the best gift of all," he said.

Tommy didn't cry. He didn't.

*I love you*, he signed as unobviously as possible.

A small part of Tommy wished he had the courage to say it.

Two mornings after the holiday, Tommy woke up with a strange heaviness in his bones.

That night, he had dreamed of Sam blaming him for killing all of those people, for killing *him*. But that... that wasn't his fault, right? That was Dre—his father's fault. Right?

Not his father. His father's killer. His abuser.

It was *his* fault. Not Tommy's.

Tommy curled up in his nest, burrowing underneath his blankets. He didn't want to move. He didn't want to do anything.

Tommy wasn't sure how long he stayed underneath his blankets before he heard someone knocking on his door.

"Hey, Tommy?" Wilbur's voice said, "Are you alright in there?"

Tommy didn't say anything.

"Tommy—" This time, Wilbur's voice was more strained, "Please answer me, I need to know that you haven't been kidnapped."

"I'm fine," Tommy murmured.

"What?"

"I'm fine!" Tommy snapped.

Tommy's breathing hitched, and he ducked his head further underneath his blankets, waiting for Wilbur to storm in and tell him off for disrespect.

But he never did. Instead, Wilbur just sighed and said, “Try to come down and eat something, alright? I’ll be back in a bit.”

And then Tommy heard Wilbur’s retreating footsteps.

Tommy didn’t bother to get up and eat anything. He didn’t want to do that.

Tommy heard someone knocking on his door again.

“Tommy?” It was Technoblade this time. “Did you eat something?”

“Yes,” Tommy lied.

“I don’t believe you,” Technoblade said.

Tommy couldn’t breathe, and he ignored Goose trying to rub her head up against his cheek. Goose wasn’t going to be any help against the punishment for lying—

“I’m not mad.” There was a clinking sound. “Try to eat something, okay? I’ve left some food outside your door.”

Tommy didn’t get up. Goose marched to the door, as though she planned on feeding Tommy herself, but Goose couldn’t open it.

Tommy didn’t deserve to eat. He didn’t deserve to eat when Sam was dead, when he had killed so many people, when he was being this disrespectful to some of the only people who cared about him.

Tubbo and Ranboo came by, and Tommy yelled at them to go away. He felt terrible moments later, but he couldn’t bring himself to get up and apologize.

So instead, Tommy cried into his pillows, trying to breathe past his panic.

He had been so good lately, and now he’d ruined it. He’d probably be taken out of this bedroom, or forced to sleep in a cell for a few days, or—

There was a gentle knock on the door. Again.

“Tommy?” It was Phil’s voice this time. “Can I come in?”

Tommy swallowed, trying to hide his tears. He may have ruined everything for everyone, but maybe he could do this one thing right and lessen the punishment.

“Yes, sir,” Tommy said meekly.

Tommy pressed his face into his pillow, and he heard the sound of the door being opened. He heard footsteps get closer, and he felt his nest move slightly as someone sat down on the side of it.

“Can you talk to me?” Phil asked gently, instead of getting angry like Tommy expected him to. “What’s going on inside that head of yours?”

But Phil was *never* angry.

Tommy didn’t say anything.

“Tommy—” This time, Phil sounded like he was pleading. “—I can’t help you if I don’t know what’s wrong.”

“I don’t want your help,” Tommy said angrily into his pillow, “I want to be left alone.”

“You haven’t eaten anything all day,” Phil said, “I can’t leave you alone when you’ve been starving yourself.”

“Somebody needs to.”

“No. Nobody should starve you. Nobody should have *ever* starved you.” Phil’s voice was firm. “It was wrong. As your father, it’s my job to make sure you eat—”

“You’re not my dad.” Hot tears squeezed from Tommy’s eyes as he glared into his pillow. “My dad is *dead*.”

The room rang with silence, and Tommy waited for Phil to finally get angry.

But, of course, he didn’t.

“Okay,” Phil said quietly, “Okay. But as someone who cares about you, I need to make sure you eat.”

“Why?”

“Because eating is important.”

“I know how to survive without food, I’m not *weak*—”

“I know.” This time, Phil sounded like he was crying, and Tommy looked up from his pillow to see that there was a tear rolling down his cheek. “You’re the strongest boy I know. But you need to eat.”

Phil was holding a plate with a sandwich sitting on top of it.

Tommy relented. “Okay,” he said quietly.

He ate his food, and Phil smiled. “I’m proud of you.”

Tommy didn’t think he had any reason to be proud of him, but Tommy didn’t argue.

A few days later, Tommy tried to go up to everyone and apologize.

But as he stood in front of Tubbo and Ranboo, his two best friends, two people he had snapped at and *hurt*, he found the words wouldn't come. No matter how hard Tommy tried to speak, no matter how hard Tommy tried to apologize, it was as though something were blocking his throat, as though something horrible were to happen, and Tommy found he couldn't say anything at all.

He didn't know what was happening. He hated himself for it.

He wanted to apologize, so why couldn't he *do it*?

*I'm sorry*, Tommy signed, *Can't speak*.

Tubbo's eyes widened. "You can't speak? Are you sick? Does your throat hurt? Did someone hurt you?"

Tommy shook his head, and more tears began spilling out of his eyes out of the hopelessness of it all.

Tubbo got Schlatt, who got Tommy's therapist, who told them that there was nothing wrong with Tommy. Apparently, Tommy was going through high levels of anxiety and stress that was preventing him from speaking, and that there was nothing wrong with it.

Everyone seemed overwhelmingly understanding, and Ranboo even gave Tommy a notebook for Tommy to write in, promising that everyone would work harder to learn more sign language.

Nobody was mad, but Tommy still felt burning shame. He was becoming a problem *again*. Why couldn't he make things easier for everyone for once?

So, despite everyone's apparent understanding, Tommy still found himself sitting alone in a garden, trying to avoid anyone and everyone.

Goose continued to give Tommy small gifts, and Tommy watched as they accumulated into a pile at his feet.

"Hi, mate."

Tommy looked up to see Phil standing next to him. He wore that sad smile on his face.

"Can I sit next to you?"

Tommy nodded, staring at the snow in between his feet.

Phil sat down with a small sigh, and Tommy waited for him to speak.

"I'm sorry," Phil whispered, "I'm sorry for failing you."

Tommy gave Phil a look of confusion. Failing him? How?

“I know you don’t see me as a father—” Phil swallowed, and Tommy’s chest hurt. “—but when you were born I held you in my arms, and I promised I’d do everything I could to protect you.”

Tommy’s eyes were burning, and he stopped looking at Phil.

*I love you*, Tommy absentmindedly signed with his fingers.

“But I failed,” Phil whispered, “And I’m so, so sorry.”

Tommy opened up the journal Ranboo gave him and quickly wrote in it.

*It’s not your fault.*

Phil gave Tommy a sad smile. “I spoke to Puffy after I killed *him*. Apparently, the reason Dream avoided me so much was because he’d been cursed to be unable to kill a member of the royal family. If I had been there, I’d probably have been able to stop him.”

Tommy didn’t like to see Phil blame himself. He circled the words in his journal and wrote a little bit underneath it.

*He took me. Not you.*

Phil gave Tommy a broken smile. “What did I do to deserve such a wonderful son?”

Whenever Phil said anything like this, it made Tommy want to hug Phil tightly and call him dad. Because he did love Phil, he *did*. It was hard to believe that Tommy used to think that Phil was dangerous to him.

But Sam was his dad. It felt like a betrayal to let Phil take that role so soon.

Tommy stared at his journal, and he quickly scribbled down a question that had been pressing against his mind for a while now.

*Can you tell me about my mother?*

Phil’s eyes were shining. “Of course.” He stared up at the sky. “She was... wonderful. She always found a way to make people laugh when there was nothing to laugh about; she was compassionate to everyone she met. She painted, and embroidered, and played the piano.” Phil looked over to Tommy fondly. “You remind me of her, actually.”

Tommy didn’t say anything, but he stared at Phil, a hunger for more in his chest. For so many years, he’d only thought of his mother and thought about how he killed her, but now... now there was something more. A desire to learn about her.

“She loved you so, so much,” Phil whispered, “She’d be proud of you.”

Tommy pressed back tears, instead shoving himself into Phil’s arms. Phil made a surprised noise, but Tommy only held on more tightly before Phil forced him to let go.

Phil only let out a wet chuckle. “I love you.”

*I love you too*, Tommy signed.

Tommy desperately wished he could say the words.

Tommy had woken up in the middle of the night again, and he was walking aimlessly down the halls, wondering if he should disturb Wilbur to wake him up.

A guard probably heading to her shift was walking by, and she narrowed her eyes at him.

“Kid,” she snapped, “What are you doing here?”

Tommy stiffened. She must be a new addition.

Normally, he’d stutteringly explain that he was the prince, and that he was just trying to go to his brother. But he still couldn’t speak. Even now, as he tried, he felt as though something were blocking his throat.

He couldn’t breathe.

“Are you going to answer me?” she demanded.

Tommy brought his hands up shakily, hoping that she understood sign language.

The guard took a step closer to Tommy, grabbing Tommy so firmly by the wrist that it hurt. Tommy’s vision blurred as he tried to stay in the moment.

“Kid, if you’re not going to explain why you’re suspiciously sneaking around at night, I’m going to have to—”

Goose started *screeching* at the top of her lungs, lunging herself at the guard’s face. The guard let go of Tommy, and Tommy dropped to the ground, trying to inhale.

He wasn’t there; he wasn’t there—

Wilbur’s bedroom door slammed open instantly, and it only took a moment for him to sprint toward Tommy, an expression of horror on his face. He dropped to his knees in front of Tommy.

“Tommy, can you hear me?”

Tommy squeezed his eyes shut and nodded. He could hear him. He could hear Wilbur.

“It’s going to be okay,” Wilbur soothed, “Can I touch you?”

Tommy nodded.

Wilbur gently pulled Tommy into a hug, and while Tommy sobbed into his brother's shirt, Wilbur twisted himself toward the guard.

"And *what*," he spat, venom leaking from his voice, "did you think you were doing with my little brother?"

"Your highness," the guard gasped, still wrestling with a furious Goose, "He looked suspicious, wandering around at night—"

"He is the *prince*," Wilbur spat, "Maybe if you had used your eyes, you would've noticed that. Consider yourself fired, and you'll be talking to the king about the consequences for your actions."

Wilbur gently led Tommy to his nest, and Goose followed. "Just sit here, Toms, baby," he whispered, ruffling Tommy's hair, "I'll be back soon."

Tommy nodded, hugging Goose close to himself.

Wilbur came back, and he hugged Tommy close, whispering promises of protection and affection. Tommy felt his chest unknot itself, and he relaxed into Wilbur's warmth.

Wilbur sung lullabies into his hair, and Tommy could only think of Sam as he drifted off to sleep.

"I've figured out what Tommy's been doing with his fingers," Technoblade said quietly to Phil and Wilbur one afternoon.

Wilbur looked up from the sign language book he was reading. "Really?"

Technoblade pointed to something in his own book, and both Phil and Wilbur walked over to see what it was.

Technoblade was pointing to a relatively simple sign drawn in the book, but it was the caption that made Wilbur's breath hitch.

*I love you.*

"Oh prime," Phil whispered.

"He loves us." Wilbur was going to cry.

Technoblade nodded.

Phil sniffed, bringing his hand to his eyes.

Wilbur and Technoblade were kind enough not to mention it. Not when they were both on the verge of tears themselves.

The snow, once again, kept Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo indoors, so the three of them decided to follow Technoblade into the vaults that he had mentioned.

“They’re not exactly anything secret,” Technoblade explained as they went deeper into the castle, “But there’s some interesting artifacts in there.”

The vault was well lit, fortunately, and Tommy gaped at the various jewels and really old looking pieces of equipment he saw scattered across the expansive room.

Tommy saw a pile of old journals, and he carefully picked one sticking out from underneath the large pile, glancing nervously at Technoblade.

“Just don’t destroy it, and we’ll be fine,” Technoblade said.

Tommy nodded, and he held his breath as he carefully opened a page of the book.

It was... a diary of some kind. A diary from a member of the royal family. Tommy read closer, and his eyes widened.

This wasn’t just a diary about a member of the royal family. This was a diary of a member of the royal family who had black wings. And they... they did some *really cool* stuff. They created the law that stopped people from stealing and distributing other people’s feathers. They pushed for people with black wings to be allowed to have jobs, which before had apparently been illegal because they were ‘threats to the workplace’.

How come Tommy had never heard of this person before?

Tommy spun around toward Technoblade and quickly pointed to the book, signing rapidly about wanting to add this person to the history books.

Technoblade took the diary and read over it, whistling. “Oh yeah, we’ll definitely be adding this. I didn’t even know this was in here. Where’d you find it?”

Tommy pointed to the journal pile, and Technoblade nodded. “I never got to read all of these,” he sighed. He picked up another one near the bottom. “This one’s going to be about another person who wasn’t deemed worthy of the history books.”

Technoblade scanned the contents of the journal, and his eyes suddenly widened.

“What is it?” Ranboo asked.

“This...” Technoblade sniffed the ridiculously old looking journal, and he grimaced. “This is centuries years old.”

Tubbo nodded. “Makes sense. This empire is also centuries years old.”

“Yeah, but—” Technoblade narrowed his eyes at the pages. “—it’s written in modern language.”



Tommy frowned. Did that mean it wasn't written in that fancy language that the older books were written in?

Technoblade handed the journal for Ranboo to see, and Ranboo's eyes widened just as wide.

"It mentions my dad," Ranboo whispered.

Technoblade snatched the book back squinting at it. "You mean Karl?"

Ranboo nodded. "I think... I think I know who that journal belongs to."

*Who?* Tommy signed. Tubbo echoed the sentiment.

Ranboo swallowed. "Um, I never like thinking about this too hard, but... I'm technically a time traveler?"

Tommy and Tubbo gaped in unison.

Tommy had seen a lot of things in his short life-span, but time travel? Surely Ranboo was messing with them.

"Remember what I told you guys about that really overpowered power that dual-winged people have?" Ranboo asked, "And if you use it there's like an opposite reaction."

Tommy nodded slowly.

"Creating your own garden just to destroy someone else's garden," Tubbo recited gravely.

Ranboo cleared his throat. "Uh, right, well... My dad's friend, Foolish, well, I don't actually know his name, dad just liked to call him that because, he, well, he tried to time travel to ancient Enderia with his power."

Tommy had a feeling he knew where this was going.

Ranboo laughed shakily, rubbing the back of his neck. "I try not to think about it too hard, but yeah, since Foolish went to the past, someone else from the past had to come to the future, and that happened to be me. Probably."

Technoblade looked vaguely confused but he nodded. "Time travel would explain the modernness of this language," he said.

Tubbo was quiet for a moment. "You never wanted to try to go back?" he asked, "To your time?"

Ranboo shrugged. "I don't remember it," he said simply, "I was just a baby when my dad found me, and I didn't want to leave my dad." Ranboo's voice became choked off. "And after he... died... I didn't want to go back to a place that I knew nothing about."

Ranboo squared his shoulders. "I might be from some ancient kingdom, but I live here, and I have family here, and I don't want to go back, especially since I could be risking displacing

someone older than a baby.”

Technoblade nodded. “That’s... startlingly mature of you.”

“Startling?” Tubbo demanded indignantly, “Ranboo’s very mature, I’ll have you know.”

“Really?” Ranboo asked hopefully.

Technoblade patted Ranboo’s shoulder. “Yeah.” He picked up the journal that Tommy had been looking at before as well. “I think I’m going to be spending a lot of time here making sure nobody else has been robbed of their place in the history books.” He looked Tommy in the eyes. “You can help me, if you’d like.”

Tommy smiled, and he nodded.

Spring came, and the snow began to melt.

Tubbo, Ranboo, and Tommy all returned to their garden, and Tommy helped Ranboo weed the weeds that were trying to sprout up with the new arrival of the sun.

There was something thrilling about crushing a black feather and using it to kill a weed. There was something thrilling about using his power for good.

The warmth in his chest told Tommy Sam would be proud of him.

Tommy was finding it easier to speak now, and he chatted animatedly to his friends about their different plans.

“Your birthday has to be coming up, right?” Tubbo asked casually.

Tommy froze.

During the winter months, they had celebrated both Tubbo and Ranboo’s twelfth birthdays. It went to reason that Tommy’s wouldn’t be so far behind.

But... Tommy didn’t know what day his birthday was. Sam had never known, and it was impossible to count days and months in that prison anyway.

He explained as much to Tubbo and Ranboo.

Tubbo scowled. “That jerk didn’t even tell you what day your birthday was?” He aggressively patted the soil with his shovel. “Dream was a really terrible person, you know that?”

Tommy cringed habitually, but he laughed. “Dream sucked,” he agreed.

All three of them froze.

“Oh prime,” Ranboo whispered, his eyes wide, “You-you said it.”

Tubbo was grinning widely. “Can you do it again?”

Tommy said it. Tommy had said his abuser’s name after all these months. Tommy actually *said it*.

His heart was thumping rapidly, excitement and pride mixed with fear and dread.

Could Tommy do it again?

“Dream!” he blurted out. He covered his hands with his mouth, glancing around for Dream to suddenly appear. Nobody did.

Tubbo and Ranboo beamed, and Tommy beamed back at them.

“We need to tell everyone,” Tubbo declared, jumping to his feet. Tubbo’s dog barked in agreement, and Ranboo was already picking up his cat to go back inside.

Goose squawked proudly, and Tommy hurried after Tubbo and Ranboo to the living area, where Schlatt, Wilbur, and Technoblade were all reading.

Tommy froze at the doorway.

“Do you want to say it again, big man?” Tubbo asked quietly, “Because if not, we can just tell them. It’s quite an achievement—”

Before Tubbo was even finished speaking, Tommy took a deep breath. “D-Dream was terrible to me.”

Technoblade, Wilbur, and Schlatt all gaped. Tommy smiled.

And then Wilbur was thrusting himself from his seat, hugging Tommy. “I’m so proud of you!” he cheered.

Tommy was shaking, whether from excitement or fear, he didn’t know. “I think I’m done for now,” he whispered, all of the adrenaline from before fading.

“That’s alright,” Wilbur said agreeably, “I’m still very proud of you.”

Technoblade nodded, pride in his eyes. “Me too.”

“I think it would be hard *not* to be proud of you,” Schlatt agreed, nodding.

“We have to tell Phil!” Wilbur was practically bouncing as he continued hugging Tommy. “He’ll be so happy!”

Tommy smiled and nodded.

“Sam!” Tommy said excitedly, sitting down in front of the stone, “Sam, you’ll never guess what I did!”

Tommy knew that if Sam was watching down on him, he probably already knew, but he didn't care.

"I said *his* name." Tommy shuddered, and he hugged his knees. "I can't do it all the time. I only said it three times."

Tommy closed his eyes, resting his chin on his knees. "Still, I thought you might like to know."

Tommy's eyes burned, and he hugged his knees closer to himself. "Also... you told me to trust Phil, all those months ago. And, I... I think I might be beginning to see him as a dad."

Tommy hesitated, and his grip tightened on the cloth of his trousers. "That's... would you be upset? Am I allowed to do that?"

Tommy's therapist said that Tommy could see Sam as his father and still see Philza as a father without replacing Sam.

But Tommy... Tommy wasn't so sure.

He tried to imagine what Sam would say if he were there. He tried to imagine the burnt smell of Sam's hair, and the coarseness of his palms on his cheeks.

Sam loved him. He would want Tommy to be happy.

Phil made Tommy happy.

"I won't forget you, okay?" Tommy whispered, his voice shaking, "I'd never forget you."

The day of Tommy's birthday, Tommy came downstairs to a fancy breakfast and a pile of presents.

"You're twelve now," Wilbur said, sounding like he was going to cry.

"How does it feel to be an entire day older?" Technoblade asked.

Tommy hummed. "Weird," he answered honestly.

Not because he was a day older. It was weird because he'd never done this birthday thing before. He'd never been given presents to mark a special day on the calendar.

He had never thought his birth would ever be something worth celebrating.

He wished Sam could be there to celebrate it with him.

Tommy would have to ask Puffy what day Sam's birthday was. Sam deserved a birthday party just as much as Tommy did.

"I love you," Phil said as Tommy thanked everyone for his various gifts.

Tommy took a deep breath, his heart pounding.

“I love you too, Dad.”

And Phil was crying, hugging Tommy, and then Tommy was crying as Phil kissed him on the head over and over again.

Tommy didn’t think it was a bad cry, though. It felt good.

Tommy imagined Sam’s satisfied smile.

It felt good.

One day in early summer, Tommy and Puffy both walked together down the hill and in front of Sam’s grave. They sat down in the soft grass surrounding it and placed a basket down in front of them.

Tommy took the necklace with the key hanging off of it from his neck and unlocked Sam’s box. Tommy’s stuffed bird laid inside.

Tommy carefully removed an embroidered image of Tubbo, Tommy, and Ranboo’s garden from their basket and placed it in the box. Puffy smiled and placed a knife in the box.

“I threatened Sam with this knife, you know,” Puffy said, smiling fondly, “The first time we met.”

Tommy’s eyes widened. “How did you become friends, then?”

Puffy laughed. “That’s always been a mystery to me as well.”

“Sam once tried to stack a pile of rocks he found in front of me,” Tommy decided to share, “They always toppled over, but I think I laughed.”

Puffy smiled. “That sounds like him.”

They closed the box, and Tommy carefully locked it again.

Tommy and Puffy both took lanterns from their basket. Puffy struck a match and lit the bottom of Tommy’s lantern. After a couple of failed attempts, Tommy did the same for Puffy.

“Happy birthday, Sam,” Puffy said, letting go of her lantern.

Tommy let go of his lantern as well. “Happy birthday.”

For those who are confused about ranboo, basically he was a prince of an ancient kingdom, foolish wanted to see that ancient kingdom by time traveling so he switched spots with ranboo, and since ranboo disappeared everyone assumed that he was kidnapped.

This chapter was gonna be less bittersweet but then my discord told me about Tommy leaving stuff at sam's grave and how could I not.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed, and please be nice in the comments (no constructive crit unless i was offensive, typos are fine). <3

Comment or I'll, man idk, kill wilbur. /lh /j

# Epilogue

## Chapter Summary

Things are better <3

## Chapter Notes

tw: implied/referenced child abuse, referenced death, grief, referenced discrimination, nightmares

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Tommy woke up with shattered memories and a broken scream.

As Goose nuzzled him reassuringly, Tommy forced himself to take in his surroundings, focusing on the stars that Eret had once placed on his ceiling.

He released a breath.

Sitting up, Tommy focused on the softness of his blankets and pillows. Dream had never let him have more than one blanket. Dream had never let him nest before.

He had a nest. He had blankets and pillows and stuffed animals.

Another breath.

Tommy was safe. He was safe at home in his bedroom at the palace. Dream couldn't find him there; Dream was dead. He'd been dead for years.

Tommy's scars ached, and Tommy quickly found a few sweaters to bundle up in. On a cold night like this, Wilbur could probably use the company.

Tommy grabbed a blanket from his nest and marched down the hall, warily eyeing any guards that might have any stupid ideas.

But none of them seemed to want to face the wrath of the royal family tonight, and Tommy made it to Wilbur's room without issue.

He hesitated in front of the door.

Maybe Wilbur didn't want to be bothered? Maybe Tommy was being selfish—

No. Wilbur said he didn't mind if Tommy came in. It was practically routine. If Wilbur had a problem with it, Tommy would've known by now.

Tommy lightly tapped the door, and he heard Wilbur's voice telling him to come in.

Tommy stepped inside, wordlessly climbing into Wilbur's nest and draping his blanket across the both of them. Wilbur was clearly still half-asleep, but he murmured something about good little brothers.

"Not so little anymore, big man," Tommy murmured right back, allowing himself to drift.

When they woke up, the sun was reflecting off the winter snow and through the windows. Wilbur wordlessly got dressed, and together, him and Tommy went down for breakfast.

Tubbo and Ranboo were already sitting at the table, bickering about proper parenting techniques.

"I just think that you have to let your kid be free to run around without you hovering," Tubbo said.

"But what if they get hurt?" Ranboo protested, "Because you weren't around?"

Tommy sighed and sat down next to Ranboo. "I don't know about you," he said tiredly, "But as long as you don't take 'lock your child up in a cell and force them to murder people' route, you're probably doing something right."

There was a moment of silence in the room, and Tommy massaged his eyes. "Too early?"

"Every time you say something like that you take years off of my life," Wilbur muttered. Tommy scowled at him, ignoring the small heart palpitation in his chest. Wilbur winced. "I should not have said that. Sorry."

Tommy sighed. "It's okay," He said, "It's a common phrase."

"Still. Sorry."

They continued eating their breakfast in a somewhat subdued silence, and Wilbur mentioned something about hanging out with his *girlfriend*, Sally. He kissed Tommy's head, causing Tommy to let out a squawk, and he ruffled both Ranboo and Tubbo's hair as he left the room.

"Did you get a nightmare today?" Ranboo asked.

Tommy only nodded.

"Me too," Tubbo said, "I dreamt my future child had been brutally injured."

"Thus sparking the conversation you walked in on," Ranboo explained.

"Makes sense," Tommy hummed.



After breakfast, they all sat down in Tubbo's bedroom with a preening train, and Tommy let his wings relax as Tubbo's fingers carefully arranged his feathers. It felt like a lifetime ago the first time Schlatt told him he didn't need to murder to get preened.

After preening, Tommy went to the library to do some lessons with Technoblade.

"You know, if you wrote about your life, it'd probably be a classic novel," Technoblade said as he slid Tommy a large volume of some translated Enderian classic.

"Nosy historians will have to be satisfied with my journal." Tommy stared at the large book glumly. "Do we really have to read this?"

Tommy clenched his fingers into a fist, but Technoblade didn't mind the casual disrespect.

"It's for your education," Techno said simply, "So, yes."

Tommy sighed, and he opened up the giant volume, hoping the plot would be at least interesting.

To its credit, it was.

Technoblade eventually freed Tommy from his forced education. "Go have fun," he said, not looking up from his own book, "Love you."

Tommy smiled. "Love you too, even if you're boring."

Technoblade only snorted.

Leaving the library, Tommy went to the private kitchen. Alone, Tommy put together the smallest amount of cake batter, put the batter in a small tin, and placed the tin in the oven.

When his small cake was finally finished, Tommy let it cool and placed it in a small basket.

Tommy left the kitchens and headed down the hallway toward a back exit from the palace, and Schlatt ran into him, holding a cloak.

"Are you going outside?" he demanded.

Tommy nodded.

Schlatt thrust his cloak into Tommy's arms. "You've got to stay warm, kid."

Tommy sighed despite the warmth in his chest as he pulled on the cloak. "You worry too much."

"I worry just the right amount," Schlatt corrected, "Stay safe out there, alright?"

Tommy smiled. "I will."

It was nice that Schlatt cared.

And with that, Tommy left the palace, smiling at a black-winged guard as he stepped out into the snow, walking a familiar trek. He supposed he could technically fly, but there was something about going through the effort of *walking* that made it feel more meaningful.

Tommy had no trouble in making it to Sam's grave. It was slightly more weather-worn than it used to be, but it was still well taken care of.

"Hi, Sam." Tommy sat down in the snow and munched on the cake he had baked. It wasn't quite as good as Niki's. "It's been a little bit, so I thought I'd check in."

Tommy smiled. "Lessons are getting harder. I guess it makes sense, I'm turning fifteen in the spring, but still." Tommy scowled and stuck his tongue out. "Everyone's really patient with me, though."

Tommy closed his eyes. "I'm really, *really* happy," he whispered, "But I haven't forgotten you. Obviously."

Tommy brushed some of the freshly fallen snow off of Sam's grave. "Love you."

*Love you too*, Tommy pretended to hear the wind whisper.

Tommy quietly walked back up to the palace, and he found Phil sitting in the living area, reading a book by the fire. His crown was sitting on the table next to him, and he looked more drained than usual.

Tommy sat down next to him, pressing his cheek against his shoulder.

"Hi, mate," Phil said softly.

"Long day?" Tommy asked.

Phil sighed, putting his book down as he wrapped an arm around Tommy's shoulders. "Just busy," Phil said simply, "Being king isn't the easiest thing in the world, you know."

Tommy nodded. "You should retire," he joked.

Phil laughed, pressing a kiss on Tommy's forehead. "That's not exactly how it works. Besides, I like being able to help change things for the better."

Tommy smiled. "Good point."

Phil smiled back at him. "How has your day been?"

Tommy hummed, pressing himself further against Phil's warmth. "Good," he said tiredly, "Talked to Sam. I think Tubbo wants to go to the market later."

"Do you want a nap first?"

Tommy really did want a nap.

“You won’t mind?”

“Of course not.”

Tommy let his eyes slip shut. “Love you, Dad.”

“Love you too, baby.”

Tommy smiled.

His heart felt warm.

## Chapter End Notes

The end <3

Thank you so much to those of you who have stuck with me until the end. A very special thanks to all of you who have inspired me, especially for these last few chapters.

If I made you cry, thank you for that as well <33333

Comment if you enjoyed this fic or I'll take away Tommy's recovery /j /lh

# The Real Ending

## Chapter Summary

the real ending

## Chapter Notes

tw: ptsd, referenced kidnapping, referenced death, injury, implied/referenced child abuse

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Sam entered yet another small town with Tommy's hand tightly in his own. Tommy huddled close to him, his cloak shielding the wings that would do nothing but earn him scorn.

Sam wished the world could be different. He wished that his son could be able to show his wings without fear.

Sam wished that he could find a place to settle down without another one of Dream's faithful servants coming to exact revenge on Sam and Tommy.

It wasn't fair. It wasn't fair that even when Sam was free, even when Dream was dead, his hold continued even so. It wasn't fair that there were monsters outside of the monsters in Sam's head. It wasn't fair that every night, Sam had to comfort his child after nightmares. It wasn't fair that Tommy would point to small buzzing creatures, asking what they were, and Sam had to honestly confess that he didn't remember.

Tommy always looked so crestfallen in those moments. He trusted Sam for everything: information, food, love. In those moments, Sam failed him, and he wanted nothing more than to cry and stew in his own self-loathing.

He wasn't good enough. He wasn't being *good-enough*.

But he couldn't even do that, because then Tommy would see him, and Sam had to stay strong for Tommy. He had to be a rock for him in a world that Tommy had never navigated before. It was the least Sam could do.

So now Sam was leading Tommy through another town, planning on buying some food with the small amount of coin he managed to earn. Tommy was still clinging closely to him, and Sam wrapped a tight arm around his shoulders in turn.

Sam wasn't going to let himself be separated from Tommy. Not again.

They approached the fruit stand. “Alright, kiddo,” Sam said softly, “What would you like?”

At first, so many food choices and overwhelmed Tommy. In all honesty, they overwhelmed Sam too. After so many years trapped in a mountain, after two decades of only being fed what Dream deemed him worthy of being fed, Sam almost forgot how to chose.

But he and Tommy were figuring it out together, and they sampled enough food over the past two months for Tommy to have some idea of his preferences.

“Strawberries,” Tommy said immediately.

Sam smiled sadly. “My preferences don’t have to be your preferences.”

Tommy glared. “I want the strawberries.”

And then Tommy stiffened, and Sam could see his wings shake from underneath his cloak. He was waiting for a blow.

But Sam wouldn’t dare hurt Tommy. The thought made him feel sick.

“Okay.” He turned to the fruit seller. “How much for a pound?”

Tommy loosened his grip on Sam as Sam counted out his money, and out of the corner of his eye, Sam saw light green wings approach.

Sam flinched on instinct, tugging Tommy toward him, but a quick double take only revealed a startled child.

Sam hit himself mentally. Of course. Dream was dead. Dream could never hurt them again.

The idea was overwhelming, at times.

“Sorry,” Sam said, “Thought you were somewhere else.”

The child, who looked about Tommy’s age, nodded. “That happens to my Dad sometimes. Puffy says it’s because his brain still think he’s in danger.”

Sam’s entire world stopped.

There was no way. There was no way this child was talking about *Sam’s* Puffy. There was no way Sam was talking about the same person who was once his best friend. There was no way this child was talking about the person Sam sacrificed everything for.

“That’s dumb,” Tommy said snappishly. The child winced.

Tommy had become more and more snappish the longer they were free. Sam knew that part of it was a survival mechanism; the world was not kind to black-borns such as Tommy. Sam also knew that Tommy was testing him, waiting to see when Sam snapped.

Tommy just never realized that Sam would never snap.

“Tommy,” Sam said sternly but still gently, “You can’t disregard trauma responses like that.”

Tommy deflated and kept his eyes carefully trained on the ground. “Sorry.”

“It’s alright. Apologize to—”

“I’m Tubbo,” Tubbo interjected.

“Apologize to Tubbo now, okay?”

Tommy was still staring at Sam like he was the strangest person in existence, but he nodded and looked at Tubbo.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered.

Tubbo brightened, hoisting up the watermelon in his hands with more gusto. “That’s alright! I see you bought strawberries; I like strawberries too!”

Tommy glanced up at Sam, clearly unsure of how to respond to such a friendly greeting. Sam only smiled encouragingly at him.

“What’s the watermelon for?” Tommy asked.

“My dad wants it for a picnic we’re going to have tomorrow,” Tubbo explained, “Would you like to come with me to drop it off? I have a really cool garden.”

Tommy looked up at Sam again. Sam could see in his eyes that he was completely split on the matter. Half of him probably didn’t want to get hurt by accepting another invitation. The other half of him was probably desperate for a friend.

Sam almost said no, knowing that staying in one place only put the two of them at more risk.

But Tubbo had mentioned Puffy earlier, and Sam *knew* he shouldn’t get his hopes up, but...

“We can come over for a little bit,” Sam said, “Only for a little bit, alright?”

Tommy nodded in agreement, and Tubbo’s shoulder’s lost tension Sam hadn’t initially realized was there to begin with.

They followed Tubbo to his house, and Sam took Tubbo’s watermelon so that he could more easily enter.

“Dad!” he called, “I’m home! I brought guests!”

A young man with red wings appeared in the hallway. He was frowning, and Sam instinctively brought Tommy closer to himself. “What sort of guests?”

“This is Tommy!” Tubbo gestured to Tommy. “And this is his dad!”

Sam faltered, and he shook his head quickly. “I’m just his caretaker,” he said, “You can call me Sam.”

Schlatt frowned. "I feel like I've heard that name before."

Sam shrugged. "It's a fairly common name," he pointed out. "I'm sorry for intruding upon your home. Tubbo wanted to show Tommy his garden."

A grin showed up on Schlatt's face, and he nodded. "I'm glad Tubbo's making friends," he said. "If you'd like, you can stay over for dinner."

Sam bit the inside of his cheek, having half a mind to refuse, but he was all too aware of the sunken quality of Tommy's cheeks. Maybe it couldn't hurt to stay for a free meal. As long as Schlatt didn't ask questions about Tommy's cloak, it should be okay.

"Alright," Sam said.

Tubbo had already taken Tommy by the hand, leading Tommy to the back door of the house, and Tommy looked at Sam with imploring eyes.

Anxiety rose in Sam's body, but he smiled and nodded. "I can keep an eye on you through the windows," he promised. "You go have fun."

Tommy nodded, following Tubbo outside.

Sam and Schlatt were left alone in the kitchen, and Schlatt gave Sam an encouraging smile.

"Here, I'll take that watermelon off of your hands."

Sam mutely let Schlatt take the watermelon away from him in favor of staring out the window, watching as Tubbo pointed to certain flowers. Tommy crouched down next to Tubbo, and Sam's chest loosened in knowing that Tommy was at least having some semblance of fun out there.

"Are you alright?" Schlatt asked, sounding strangely concerned for someone who didn't actually *know* Sam. "The kids will be fine, if that's what you're worried about."

"How can you be sure?" Sam whispered, clenching his hands into fists.

Already, Sam could imagine Dream's followers rushing into the garden and taking Tommy away before Sam could get there in time. Already, Sam could imagine the terror he would feel when his baby was taken away from him.

"We have a good view of them." Schlatt gestured to the windows. "If anything goes wrong, we'll be the first to know."

Sam nodded, because Schlatt wasn't actually *wrong*, but he stared out the window nonetheless. Memory from a long-forgotten time bade Sam to show some actual manners, to speak to Schlatt cordially, but fear for Tommy overran the lessons a different Sam had learned when he was just a child.

"Why don't you help me make dinner?" Schlatt offered.

Sam remembered *some* manners, at least, and he nodded, following Schlatt to the kitchen counter. Schlatt handed Sam some carrots, a knife, and a wooden block.

“You can cut up the carrots,” Schlatt prompted.

Sam’s hand shook as he gripped the knife properly, but he forced himself to stay steady. He had cut up plenty of ingredients in the twenty years he had spent underground to make potions. He knew how to use a knife. He knew how to chop things up.

Sam willed himself not to think of the knife that had gotten so terrifyingly close to killing Sam. Sam willed himself not to think about the way he had panickily crushed one of Puffy’s feathers before slicing Dream’s head clean off.

That was over now. Sam was safe. Well, Sam was safe enough. He just had to cut up the carrot.

Sam lowered the knife on the carrot, and he flinched when the knife made a sharp sound against the hard vegetable. A small carrot slice fell on the cutting board, and Sam could only imagine Dream’s head landing on the ground in a similar fashion.

The knife in Sam’s hand was shaking wildly, but Sam forced himself to do another slice, and another, and another. Schlatt had given him direct orders, and Sam wasn’t about to ruin things for Tommy because he was too afraid of a stupid knife.

Sam’s hand shook again, and this time, the blade cut through a part of his finger. Hissing, Sam dropped the knife and held tightly onto his fresh wound.

“Crap,” Schlatt muttered, putting down his own knife he had been peeling potatoes with. “Here, I know I have something in here...”

Schlatt helped wrap a bandage around Sam’s fingers, and Sam-

(i never finished writing this sorry lol)

-sam reunited with puffy

-he got to live in the castle with tommy

-and he lived happily ever after



NOT

APRIL FOOLS

SAM DEAD HAHAAHHAHHAHHAHHAHHAHHAHHAHHAHHA

Chapter End Notes

Don't kill me.

## End Notes

Ask me stuff on [Tumblr](#) and [Discord](#). <3

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